RESTING IN THE HIGHEST GOOD: THE CONSCIENCE OF A UTAH LIBERAL

by

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ABSTRACT

Resting in the Highest Good: the Conscience of a Utah Liberal is a limited biography of Elbert Duncan Thomas, who served as United States Senator from Utah between 1933 and 1951. He was defeated by Wallace F. Bennett in the election of 1950.

Elbert Thomas was a civilized man living in an uncivilized time who served the people of the state of Utah for nearly eighteen years from the floor of the United States Senate. He did so by drawing from an emotional and spiritual wellspring of ethical humanitarianism that lay at his moral center from birth to death. It is not intended to be a comprehensive recounting of his Senate career, but rather focuses on the moral and ethical worldview that guided his work by recounting specific events that are illustrative of those strongly held beliefs. It can also be argued that his strong sense of decency and fair play helped to lay him low in the election of 1950, since he refused to conduct his campaign on the uncivil level of his opponent.

The bulk of research for the book was conducted in the personal papers of Elbert D. Thomas (housed at the Utah State Historical Archive), Frank Jonas (University of Utah Marriott Library Special Collections), Reed O. Smoot, Wallace F. Bennett, and Arthur V. Watkins (Harold B. Lee Library Special Collections, Brigham Young University). Additionally, approximately 153 book length secondary sources and numerous articles were consulted. As noted, no man evolves in a vacuum and I felt it necessary to construct a contextual landscape on which to place my subject.

Chapters cover his early life, but the greater part of the text deals with his Senate career and the humanitarian causes he chose to champion there, including civil liberties, Japanese-Americans, American labor, the Holocaust, and the establishment of the state of Israel. Chapter 9 deals with the election of 1950 and the emerging climate of anti-Communist hysteria that was beginning to infect America during those years. In all cases, I have, successfully I hope, reiterated Senator Thomas's dedication to making moral decisions.

For Patrick and Nicole

The Way of the Great Learning consists in clearly exemplifying illustrious virtue, in loving the people, and in resting in the highest good.

Only when one knows where one is to rest can one have a fixed purpose. Only with a fixed purpose can one achieve calmness of mind. Only with calmness of mind can one achieve serene repose. Only in serene repose can one carry on careful deliberation. Only through careful deliberation can one have achievement. Things have their roots and branches; affairs have their beginning and end. He who knows what comes first and what comes last comes himself near the way.

The ancients who wished clearly to exemplify illustrious virtue throughout the world would first set up good government in their states . . . they would first cultivate their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they would first rectify their minds. Wishing to rectify their minds, they would first seek sincerity in their thoughts. Wishing for sincerity in their thoughts, they would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. For only when things are investigated is knowledge extended; only when knowledge is extended are thoughts sincere; only when thoughts are sincere are minds rectified; only when minds are rectified are our persons cultivated; only when families are regulated are states well governed; and only when states are well governed is there peace in the world.

From the emperor down to the common people, all, without exception, must consider cultivation of the individual character as the root. If the root is in disorder, it is impossible for the branches to be in order. To treat the important as unimportant and to treat the unimportant as important—this should never be. This is called knowing the root; this is called the perfection of knowledge.

--Confucius
The Great Learning

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PREFACE

In 1947 Edward Moore Kennedy was fifteen years old; his older brother, John, who had recently been elected to the House of Representatives had just taken him on a tour of the Congressional building and grounds. "You've just seen all the buildings that symbolize what is important about this country," he said. "But remember it isn't just the buildings. It's what happens inside the buildings that matters." [1]

Being a Senator, Ted Kennedy believed, changes a person fundamentally and profoundly, creating within him or her a heightened sense of purpose. "If ever the sight of [Capitol Hill] does not move me," he told his wife, "I will know it is time to step aside . . .a desire to do the right thing, to serve the national interest, is inspired by the surroundings."[2] Cynics could note that Senator Kennedy was making these observations at a time when he knew his career—and indeed his life—were nearing the end, but his deep and sincere attachment to what he considered the physical and emotional heart of American democracy should not be minimized. His descriptions of the magnificent murals, frescoes, and portraits that decorate the interior walls, the forty-eight Senate desks that date back to 1819, the tradition of new Senators scratching their names into the bottoms of desk drawers going back to the early 1900s, the Old 1908 Senate Office building in the Beaux Arts style that contains within it an intangible closeness to history, bespeak a deeply rooted faith in the potential inherent in American political idealism.

The breakdown of the old style of camaraderie that had so long pervaded the Senate began, Kennedy believed, during the years of extreme pressure in the 1960s created by the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, but a sense of community remained. That sense of community, the face-to-face interaction, he maintained, has since deteriorated significantly for a variety of reasons: BlackBerries, cell phones, and the vast shift of responsibility onto Senatorial staff workers who do 95% of the drafting and negotiating. We have, he said, lost "what the Senate *is*" and "our relationships with people and of what all that should lead to, which is the unfettered and vital exchange of ideas. I think of the withering away of the collegiality and sense of collective mission as the corruption of the Senate"—not in a legal sense but in a broken one. Kennedy ascribed this to two factors: a reluctance on the part of the public for Senatorial involvement in public affairs, and the distorted influence of money and the power of vested interests as unhealthy influences on the legislative process. [3]

In his insightful *New Yorker* article "The Empty Chamber" George Packer contends that "Nothing dominates the life of a senator more than raising money." He quotes Iowa Democrat Tom Harkin as saying, "Of any free time you have, I would say fifty percent, maybe even more is spent on fund-raising."[4] But David Broder in the *Washington Post* believed the problem lies deeper. The crucial factor, he felt, is "the absence of leaders who embody and can inculcate the institutional pride that once was the hallmark of membership in the Senate. . .Its best leaders have been men who were capable, at least on occasion, of rising above partisanship or parochial interest . . . that almost shamed their colleagues out of their small-mindedness. . . Many forces—from the money chase to the party realignments, to the intrusiveness of 24-hour media—have

weakened the institutional bonds of the Senate. *But it is the absence of the ethic embodied and enforced by its leaders that is most crippling."*[5] (italics mine)

The subject of this study was a civilized man living in an uncivilized time, a scholarly, cerebral, and cosmopolitan human being who served not only the people of the state of Utah but the people of America and indeed the world in its darkest hours for nearly eighteen years from the floor of the United States Senate. He did so by drawing from an emotional and spiritual wellspring of ethical humanitarianism that lay at his moral center from birth to death. It is not intended to be a comprehensive recounting of his Senate career, but rather will focus on the moral and ethical world view that guided his work by recounting specific events that are illustrative of those strongly held beliefs. The work in which he engaged happened to be politics. In his essay "The Profession and Vocation of Politics," Max Weber maintained that a politician must have three qualities for success: devotion to a cause, a sense of responsibility, and an acute judgment attuned to the consequences of one's actions.[6] The specifics mentioned above, the author hopes, will clearly illuminate these qualities.

At the core of this examination of Elbert Duncan Thomas's political life lies the question as to what has been lost in the highest echelons of American government, but perhaps more important[7], *why.* Is the United States Senate "running on empty?" Quoting the decline and fall of this once most prestigious of American political institutions, George Packer in "The Empty Chamber" notes the "public disdain for Congress, measured in record low approval scores in polls." One conservative Republican Senator voiced to Broder his "bitter disappointment" that he did not find the "collegial, challenging body" that his predecessor had described to him—"or the cross-party

friendship that Vice President Joe Biden had told him he once enjoyed in his travels with a Republican counterpart from his own state."[8]

Originally designed as the Upper House of a bicameral legislature, Senatorial powers were established in Article One of the Constitution in the hope that these powers would be more exclusive, more deliberative, represent larger constituencies, serve longer terms and ideally be less partisan that the "people's" House of Representatives—all in the name of compromise. Americans, as Shelby Foote observed, like to think of themselves as uncompromising, but American government is based on it. When Alexis de Tocqueville visited the Senate in 1832 he remarked that he was deeply impressed by the character of its members: "They represent only the lofty thoughts [of the nation] and the generous instincts animating it, not the petty passions." But his observation also contained a *caveat*: ". . . a minority of the nation dominating the Senate could completely paralyze the will of the majority." (Senators would not be popularly elected until the adoption of the Seventeenth Amendment in 1913.)

The United States Senate has certainly never been a stranger to slanderous rhetoric, personal insult, or even physical violence on the floor—the nearly fatal beating of Senator Charles Sumner by Preston Brooks prior to the outbreak of the Civil War being the most extreme and disturbing case. With passions and emotions escalating year by year and crisis after crisis, by 1861 the Senate became the national arena in which the struggle for power between North and South was played out; despite compromises and gag rules the overarching issue of slavery could not be resolved until the quarrel spilled onto the battlefield in the nation's bloodiest conflict. After the question was thus decided the possibility of secession was raised no more; after 1877 attention turned away from

reforming American society toward enriching it. Nevertheless, progressive impulses in American social and political culture waxed and waned, but by the end of the 1920s disastrous fiscal policies, the imbalance of wealth, overproduction, under consumption, and speculation in the stock market combined to collapse the economic house of cards. It was during this palpably dangerous time that Elbert Thomas stepped onto the national political stage. The New Deal's Hundred Days (the length of the first session of the Seventy-third Congress, March 9, 1933, to June 16, 1933) "began in an atmosphere of apprehension. . .but the apprehension was mingled with the excitement and exhilaration as members of Congress realized they were participating in a momentous period of American history."[9] The fact that the House passed the president's Emergency Banking Relief Act after only thirty-eight minutes of debate without having seen a printed copy of the text speaks volumes. The burst of legislation that followed may be explained in several ways—from primitive terror residual to a national catastrophe of epic proportions, or for the more jaded among us, to simple lockstep obedience to a politically masterful chief executive—but it is also a reflection of a Congressional willingness to cooperate in the best interests of the country.

The Senate Chamber is laid out in four concentric semicircles, with adjacent desks meant to emphasize the senators' unity; it has been noted that in the contemporary chamber even eye contact is avoided by six feet of aisle that separate what seem to be "warring camps." Often referred to as the world's "greatest deliberative body," Jeff Merkley, a freshman Democrat from Oregon said, "That is a phrase that I wince each time I hear it, because the amount of real deliberation, in terms of exchange of ideas, is so limited." [10] "None of the Republicans I spoke to agreed with the contention that the

Senate is 'broken," Packer writes. One Senator claimed that "he and other Republicans were exercising the moderating, thoughtful influence on legislation that the founders wanted in the Senate. 'The Senate wasn't created to be efficient,' he argued. It was created to be inefficient."[11] Attitudinally, one could easily conclude that dysfunction in the halls of Congress is reflective of the near mass-neurosis that has infected American political thinking at the grass-roots level. Syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts calls it a "pitch-forks-and-torches mentality, a funhouse mirror distortion of traditional conservatism . . . They are the people who want 'their' country back. The old guard . . . doesn't much like them, but it likes winning so it keeps its mouth shut. . . the Southern Poverty Law Center says the number of radical anti-government groups spiked to 824 in 2010, a 61 percent increase over just the previous year." And this, he contends, is not simply an overblown shrill temper tantrum, but a true "anti-government extremism [that] has moved from remote woods to Capitol Hill."

Over the course of Elbert Thomas's Senatorial career the metaphorical wolf howled at the national door in the form of financial disaster, the worst global war in history, and the birth of an atomic age, that, given the ideological deterioration between former allies swollen into superpowers, made the world a more dangerous place than it had ever been. One wonders what the outcome would have been had different attitudes and behaviors prevailed. No one acquainted with McCarthyism and anti-Communist hysteria could realistically argue that Congressional thought and action were stellar in the postwar/early Cold War era, but would today's toxic bipartisanship and the stubborn petulant refusal to even appear cooperative perhaps have made standing on the brink more precarious?

Republican Olympia Snowe of Maine announced her intention to leave the Senate for reasons that are not unrelated to what Judd Gregg, Democrat from New Hampshire, has defined as the lack of understanding of "the history or tradition of the institution. Substantive, thoughtful, moderate discussion," he says, has been "pushed aside."[12] "Some people," Senator Snowe believes, "were surprised" by her conclusion that two truths "are all too often overshadowed in today's political discourse: Public service is a most honorable pursuit, and so is bipartisanship . . . the Founding Fathers intended the Senate to serve as an institutional check that ensures all voices are heard and considered, because while our constitutional democracy is premised on majority rule, it is also grounded in a commitment to minority rights . . . the greatest deliberative body in history is not living up to its billing. . .The result is that there is no practical incentive for 75 percent of the senators to work across party lines. . .our leaders must understand that there is only strength in compromise, courage in conciliation and honor in consensus-building."[13] The Senate, Snowe believes, cannot "correct itself from within. It is by nature a political entity and, therefore, there must be a benefit to working across the aisle."

It is this writer's hope that an examination of the life of one Senator who understood these principles will partially enlighten how an ethical center is necessary to bring about much needed cooperation and redirection. Three weeks before Richard Nixon resigned the presidency, Republican Senator John Tower of Texas said, "I suppose there is a certain amount of amorality that almost all politicians will tolerate. But there is also a threshold . . . The Senators feel very strongly about the historical magnitude of this . . . and very few . . . will be willing to undercut their duties." [14] Rules and precedents are not at the root of the problem but rather an anemia in genuine human concern and decency.

In *The Great Learning*, although written or edited by Confucius's disciples as late as two centuries after his death, the essence of his teaching remains unchanged: good government begins with the cultivation of individual morality and is essential if order and justice are to prevail in the framework of the larger community. Alexis de Tocqueville realized that we must create a political culture in which "lofty thoughts" and "generous impulses" lie at that ethical center.[15] Elbert Thomas would have recognized that as well.

In making myself a student of this discipline, I have concluded that ultimately history is the sum total of human life—and in this respect, an individual human life is not extraneous. I have also concluded that individual personalities can have a profound impact on shaping seemingly insignificant events or obviously world altering eras. Toward this end I have attempted in the following pages to do justice to one such life. I leave it to the reader to assess not only my accuracy but also the contribution of my subject, Elbert Duncan Thomas, who, among other things, was not willing to turn the world over to Hitler or Hirohito, who believed in the dignity of man and who deplored the degradation of poverty and the injustice of unrealized aspirations.

I cannot express the gratitude I feel toward my mentors, Dr. Larry R. Gerlach and Dr. F. Alan Coombs, two of the finest teachers and scholars it has been my good fortune to know, and the patience and validation they have given me for more years than I will willingly enumerate. Any errors or misjudgments I have made are products of my own failings and do not reflect in any way on their advice, tutelage, or unfailing graciousness.

I must also thank my children, William Patrick and Elizabeth Nicole, for their goodness, their good sense, and their unfailing contributions to the betterment of human society. It was my privilege to bring them into this world. My only regret is that some of

the people nearest and dearest to me did not live to read the parts of this story that are woven into my family's history: My maternal grandmother, Enid Muriel Logan Maxwell, who was released from Dearborn Jail on Christmas Eve of 1937, incarcerated for handing out UAW literature in front of the Ford Plant; my grandfather, Wallace Christopher Maxwell, who saw his UAW brethren shot to death and participated in the sit-down strikes at Ford; and above all, my father, William Marland Zabriskie, the finest man I ever knew, and a Teamster to the bone. It is to them that I owe my own belief, taught to me from birth, that this must be a country where all can speak, all can be heard, and that the lofty words in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution must not be sterile promises.

There are, in addition, friends to whom I owe thanks for their encouragement and belief in me: Steve, Loren, Trudy, Randi, Jim, Cherie, Ryan, David and Cindy—a single entity—and the students I taught along the way for their interest and enthusiasm.

The staff at the State Archives also deserve my gratitude for their unfailing efficiency, patience, and many kindnesses—Melissa Coy Ferguson, Tony Castro, Greg Walz, Doug Misner, and Heidi Stringham. The state of Utah will never know how fortunate it is to have employed them.

The reader will note that I have relied heavily on the Elbert Thomas Papers housed at the Utah State Historical Archive. This was done for several reasons, but foremost because the collection is voluminous (243 boxes comprising 121.5 linear feet) and I felt the best way to get to the moral and ethical center of the man, if that was possible, was to read as much of what he wrote and what was written about him at the time of his political career as possible. I have also studied many secondary contextual

sources in the hope of creating a stage on which to put him: no man's character evolves in a vacuum.

At the beginning of Sir Richard Attenborough's epic film on the life of Mohandas Gandhi the following quote appears:

> No man's life can be encompassed in one telling. There is no way to give each year its allotted weight, to include each event, each person, who helped to shape a lifetime. What can be done is to be faithful in spirit to the record and try to find one's way to the heart of the man.

This is what I have attempted to do: to recreate the "warmth of a life being lived," in Paul Murray Kendall's words—haltingly at times, overly enthusiastic at others—but always with the best of intentions. Stephen Oates entitled his compilation of essays by authors who had devoted their work to the study of others *Biography as High Adventure.* It is that indeed.

—Linda Muriel Zabriskie
March 7, 2012

Endnotes

[1] Edward Kennedy, *True Compass* (New York: Twelve, 2009), 483.
[2]Ibid.
[3] Kennedy, *True Compass*, 486-487.
[4]George Packer, "The Empty Chamber: Just How Broken is the U. S. Senate," *New Yorker,* August 9, 2010, 35-47.
[5]David Broder, "A Once-Proud U. S. Senate Running on Empty, *Salt Lake Tribune,* August 6, 2010, Section A.
[6]Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery,* (New York, W. W. Norton, 2010), xix.
[7]Leonard Pitts, Jr., "The Tea Party is more than a temper tantrum," *Miami Herald, October* 2, 2011.
[8]Broder. "A Once Proud U. S. Senate."
[9] Robert Byrd, *The Senate 1789-1989: Addresses on the History of the United States Senate,* (Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 464.
[10]Packer, "The Empty Chamber", 4.
[11] Ibid.
[12]Olympia J. Snowe, "Why I Am Leaving the Senate," Post Opinions, *Washington Post,* March 1, 2012.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, *The Final Days*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1976), 317.
[15]*The Way of the Great Learning,* William J. Duiker and Jackson Spielvogel, *World History,* (United States, Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 75.

CHAPTER 1

ROOTS AND BRANCHES

. . .in the hands of a truly great politician the qualities
we generally associate with decency and morality—
kindness, sensitivity, compassion, honesty, and
empathy—can also be impressive political resources.
Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*
Introduction, p xvii[16]

The world into which Elbert Thomas was born was very different from the one he left seventy years later. It was, in Mark Twain's pejorative phrase, the Gilded Age; with the exception of Grover Cleveland, no Democrat had occupied the White House since the Civil War. Republican domestic policy more often than not found itself on the side of what seemed to be a voracious capitalism bent on the destruction of nascent unionism and simple justice for the working classes. Immigrants from Europe and Asia, hoping to escape religious persecution or to take advantage of economic opportunity, left their homelands by the hundreds of thousands, flooded onto both coasts and were taken in by political machines in teeming urban areas, or pushed westward into the interior where their dreams collided with the traditional ways of life of Native Americans. Wounded Knee was seven years in the future. *Radio, movie, tractor, propaganda, chauffer*, and *aviator* had not yet become words in the English language. There was no jazz, nylon, neon, or polyester. No one was diagnosed as schizoid, psychotic, or neurotic.

The western states for the most part were remote isolated farming communities with no gas streetlights or indoor plumbing. A vast disparity existed between rural and urban America. The South lagged far behind the rest of the nation in nearly every respect. Nine out of ten black Americans lived in the region and 88 percent of its black population were sharecroppers, trapped in an indescribably bleak mode of survival, while the *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* decision of 1896 provided the foundation for the statutory expression of racism and white supremacy and legitimized Jim Crow. Progressives sought to improve the lives of the "underclasses," while crusading journalists exposed social evils in urban life, the meatpacking and patent medicine industries, and chastised those who exploited child labor. American imperialism would come into its own with the acquisition of the Philippines and a stake in the Far East and pointedly flexed the muscle of military power with the Great White Fleet. Temperance—a consistent focus of social reformers since the early days of the Republic—was shrilly advocated by the ax-wielding Carrie Nation and her devoted followers and became a metaphor on the fissures in the edifice of American society. Clearly world civilization was on the brink of cataclysmic change that would leave traditionalists stunned, confused, and often belligerent. But in this context Elbert Thomas's life may be seen as a testimonial to his ability to grapple with that change and use it to the advantage of the less fortunate whose lives he sought to improve. His legacy would be an elevation of politics to a vantage point of morality, decency, commitment, and humanitarian activism that not only enriched his constituency but those outside the borders of Utah and the United States of America as well.

When Elbert Thomas was born in Salt Lake City on June 17, 1883, Utah had not yet been granted statehood. It had been nearly thirty-six years since the first members of

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) had arrived in Utah. The relocation into the Great Basin in 1847 was particularly unique among pioneer migrations in that it transplanted an entire homogeneous society complete with social and cultural institutions (the charter of Salt Lake City was a virtual duplication of the Nauvoo Charter: all three components remained intact).[17] For all practical purposes Mormon Utah Territory was a theocracy populated by a refugee people whose memories of persecution and death were still vivid. They had chosen the desolation of this uninhabited area specifically for that reason and had intended not to be molested again.

Although Mormon isolationism had always been more illusory than real (the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 had dictated that Mormon settlements no longer rested on Mexican ground), the completion of the transcontinental railroad at Promontory Point in 1869 resulted in a higher (and often less than flattering) profile for the Territory.[18] Mineral discoveries, the presence of federal troops and officials, and its lengthy territorial status fed many of the same quarrels that would divide its society from the time of the immigration of non-Mormons ("gentiles" in Mormon vernacular). Cultural friction was inevitable. Ideologies had been at odds over the spirituality of God, the influence of Brigham Young, and the structure of the family within the institution of polygamy. One of the deficiencies of Utah society prior to the coming of the railroad was its almost complete lack of a comprehensive system of public education. Another significant bone of contention was the lack of a two-party political system; after Utah attained territorial status the Mormon Church was no longer in complete control because of the presence of "gentile" governors and judges. Considering American devotion to the theory of Manifest Destiny, statehood was also inevitable, but only after the not

inconsiderable problems of Mormon versus governmental authority, religious intolerance, and public education were solved. The arrival of Methodists and Father Lawrence Scanlan emphasized the increasing "gentile" presence, and the diverse Protestant and Catholic groups functioned in a spirit of amicability and ecumenism remarkable for the time. The influence of the railroad and mining industry could no longer be ignored, although this influence seldom extended into the sparsely populated agrarian settlements outside of Salt Lake City. Utah's social practices were deemed increasingly distasteful to mainstream America. As the rift continued to widen, however, according to the 1880 federal census the territory remained heavily Mormon. Table 1 shows a breakdown of Utah's 1880 religious makeup.

That same year Utah liberalism was rejuvenated with the appointment to the governorship of Eli Murray. With his "religious rancor as well as political animosity" toward all things Mormon, he vigorously set out, according to Orson F. Whitney in his *History of Utah*, to destroy the ecclesiastical/economic/political/and social "dictatorship of Mormonism" and provided the stimulus for the passage of the Edmunds Act of March 23, 1882, and the Edmunds-Tucker Act five years later. When the Liberal and People's parties squared off in the election of 1882, of the twelve planks in the Liberal platform,

Table 1. Utah Population 1880 Census[19]

Mormon	120,283
Gentile (Non-Mormon)	14,156
Apostate	6,988
Josephites	820
Miscellaneous/Doubtful	1,176
Total Population	**143,963**

nine were antichurch—an arraignment of the "Mormon power" in Utah. The Edmunds Act of March 23, 1882, had made polygamy a felony, disenfranchised Mormon men, ended trial by jury, and vacated all Utah offices. The Edmunds-Tucker Act, which became law when Elbert Thomas was four years old, disincorporated the church, dissolved the Perpetual Emigration fund, required an antipolygamy oath, illegitimized and stripped of their inheritances Mormon children, recognized civil marriage licenses only, abrogated common law spousal privilege, disenfranchised women, replaced local judges with federal appointees, put local schools under federal control, and banned sectarian books. (In 1890 the United States Supreme Court would uphold seizures of Mormon Church properties.) It was into this tumultuous and hostile environment that Thomas was born.[20]

However, since the cooperative church-controlled economy was designed to force non-Mormon business out of the city and the territory, it was, in the final analysis, this economic issue that led to the establishment of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. With the appearance of ZCMI (Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution) the ensuing economic and political disagreement led to apostasy and eventual irrepressible conflict.[21] The evolution of the newspaper's journalistic attitudes and editorial policy provide a revealing backdrop to the development of the liberal-conservative quarrels that characterized Utah politics by the decade of Elbert Thomas's birth. It was in this milieu that *Utah Magazine* was created. Initially it was regarded as a positive addition to the periodical literature of the area, but eventually its editorial policy clashed with Brigham Young over the development of mineral resources. The LDS Church's *Deseret News* went so far in an editorial on October 26, 1896, as to predict an "evil result" of the "course they are

pursuing," said course being "directly opposed to the work of God."[22] Ultimately the magazine was banned by the church. New Movement Mormons (Godbeites), also dissatisfied with church-mandated economic policy, consequently made the decision to abandon the magazine and begin publication of the *Mormon Tribune*. From the outset the paper printed news and editorials related to mining camp activities, cooperation, and the "voluntary freeing" of [local government] politics. Far from being anti-Mormon, William Godbe and like-minded prominent Mormons wanted to bring the church into conformity with American law and tradition to rescue it from destruction at the hands of the federal government—and its Achilles' heel, as they well knew, was polygamy. As Malmquist pointed out, "Whatever it might have been to spiritual minded Mormon elders who entered into the practice, it was sex to the outside world."[23] "Mormonism," the *Tribune* warned on September 22, 1877, "deprives the people of sovereignty. . .This is anti-republican, and its evil consequences are shown in the enslavement of the minds of the people."[24]

"Pa never talked very much and neither did my mother," Elbert Thomas wrote in 1943, "but in my father's safe there was one pigeonhole where he stacked up choice letters. Those letters bespoke his worth. The trust which great businessmen in the East and insurance executives had in him and in his judgment was almost beyond belief, and I had no idea that he did as much for people as the letters showed."[25] His father, Richard Kendall Thomas, had been born on June 30, 1844, in Cornwall, England, to a "property holder, referred to as a 'squire.'" After having finished his apprenticeship to a draper, he met Mormon missionaries in London, was baptized, confirmed, and ordained an elder and "set apart" as a missionary all on the same day.

Both of Thomas's parents had converted to Mormonism independently in England and come west in 1863. His mother, Caroline Stockdale, had been born on June 30, 1844, in Cornwall, England, and walked from Missouri to Utah with other converted members of her family. She returned to him frequently in memory, he said, whenever he observed or confronted conflict between science and religion: "My mother's words saved me when she said there could be no conflict because the basis of God's power is knowledge. To God there are no miracles. He just knows how. I remembered my mother when I saw a Buddhist prayer wheel being turned by a water wheel."[26]

His father crossed the plains "with a body of 'Saints'" without relatives (he later brought several members of his family to the United States but none of them became Mormons) and was assigned scouting duties to be on the lookout for hostile Indians. Upon his arrival in the Mormon capital at the age of nineteen, Richard Thomas's first job was copying parts for actors in the Salt Lake Theatre, and this love for dramatics he would later pass on to his children. Feeling himself securely established enough to take a wife, he married Caroline Stockdale in Richmond, Cache County, on February 28, 1865. In 1869 he was hired by the Walker Brothers as a manager of both bank and store, the Walkers having founded "an institution out of which have come many institutions." In 1869 they supplied food for laborers working on the Union and Central Pacific Railroads. They were non-Mormons and Elbert Thomas noted that their home was in a part of the city where Mormons were in the minority. This, combined with his father's frequent trips east, his broad spectrum of friendships, and the many visitors from "almost everywhere," provided the Thomas children with a perspective on the world and the lifestyles of those outside the purview of the Mormon community.[27] In 1884 Richard Thomas was able to

open his own mercantile business on the "clock corner" of First South and Main Street. R. K. Thomas Dry Goods sold "everything but hats," Elbert's sister Rose remembered, and the children were seasonally allowed to go into the establishment and choose clothing and fabric, which resulted in their being "well-dressed with a sense of style." [28]Eventually the family would include five boys and four girls; two of the children died in infancy, and Elbert Duncan was eighth of the nine.

"My father was always a leading businessman. He was a 'Sagebrush' Democrat in that he became a Democrat when the state divided on party lines. He remained a Democrat all his life."[29] Since the Utah two-party system came about in Utah in a unique way, a brief explanation is in order here.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Utah politics were for all intents and purposes organized along religious lines, and loyalties divided between the Mormon People's Party and the Gentile Liberal Party. Clearly, however, it would become necessary to bring the Utah political structure closer to the mainstream of the American political system practiced throughout the country. By 1884 a Democratic party club had been organized which connected Utah Democrats with those on the national level; four years later the "Sagebrush Democracy" (a derisive term applied by the *Salt Lake Tribune*) was established and signaled the first genuine effort to unite Utahns in support of the national Democratic organization. The strongest impetus was provided with the Manifesto of 1890 outlawing polygamy, and both Republican and Democratic parties emerged. Many assumed that Mormon Church leaders would, as they had traditionally done, gravitate toward the Democrats, but in 1894 Frank J. Cannon was elected territorial representative to Congress as a Republican, and delegates to the Constitutional

Convention represented a thirteen-vote majority over the Democrats. Democrats did enjoy some brief success after the presidential election of 1896, in which 80 percent of the presidential vote went to William Jennings Bryan and Democrats were elected on the state and local levels, but after 1900 those gains declined and the period was characterized by the rise of Reed Smoot and the political alliance between Mormons and Gentiles in a united Republican organization.[30]

Richard K. Thomas did not detach himself from the turmoil that was Utah politics virtually from the time of his arrival. It is not unlikely, having grown up in England as the son of a country squire and having been apprenticed as a boy to a draper, that he was acquainted early in his life with British working class liberalism. European liberalism had been essentially an Enlightenment phenomenon directed toward reform; conventional truisms, questioned by an increasingly widening reading public, were challenged in the name of the improvement of the human condition. Since change occurred simultaneously with the rise of industrialism, the exhilaration was often accompanied by violence, social problems, dislocations, injustice, and inevitably inspired a critique of Western civilization and demanded a reformed society based on "careers open to talent." Unquestionably, however, the British society at the time of Richard Thomas's birth was the most liberated in the world; the English monarchy was constitutional and limited, and "English liberties" were, given the context of the time, rational and humane.[31]

His political convictions, although perhaps influenced by the environment in which he was born and raised, were deeper, more complicated, and highly personal; "His democracy," his son wrote, "undoubtedly was due to his experiences in business and his relations with businessmen in the East. Although the division in party lines has been

described as a dividing up process by some of our historians, that was not the case with men like my father who had spent so much of his time in the East. He was a Democrat from conviction and association." Furthermore, contrary to popular perceptions, Thomas reiterates, advice may have been provided by the priesthood, but it emphasized the necessity of dividing on national party lines. Father, mother, and son, he states, were involved in politics in many capacities prior to the granting of statehood in 1896, and "I never experienced, myself, any pressure and I have never heard of my father or mother being told how to vote or what party to join." They were, he continues, always in the "heat of things" and no one ever mistook their dedication to the principles of the Democrats. After the election of 1904, when some prominent in the party suggested disbanding, Elbert Thomas's father never entertained the idea—nor did he.[32]

His prominence was attested to by his name being repeatedly mentioned as a candidate for the governorship, but he always declined such offers except for his agreement to run for the state legislature in 1898. Elected state senator, his work included support for the movement of the University to its present location "on the hill," mine inspection legislation, and eight-hour laws.[33]

"Our home was good," Thomas remembers. "I remember the candle chandeliers being piped for gas, then made over into electric fixtures. We had candles, lamps, gas and electric lights at the same time, and to her dying day, my mother always kept a candle on her dressing table. Pioneers take no chances." His sister Rose's memoir, *Four Forty Three* (the address of their home) is understandably—and forgivably—sentimental perhaps, but nevertheless paints a vivid picture of a lively interactive family—a sort of hybrid of the Bobbsey Twins and Theodore Roosevelt's brood in the White House. The

home itself was a three-story brick surrounded on all sides by porches, a large lawn, and four flower gardens which were often the setting for parties and gatherings of family and friends. Behind the house was an orchard of fruit trees and a red barn with a hayloft.

Creative activities were cultivated and encouraged by loving and involved parents, and a diverse menagerie of pets had free run of the premises, including a pony, a parrot, a rat, cats, and a Newfoundland and bulldog. Mother Caroline, Rose writes, was "a pretty lady, kind and thoughtful." Vacations took the family, often by train, to the canyons and camping in summer; winter was taken up with music, plays, molasses candy, sleigh riding, dressing up, playing house, and reading Louisa May Alcott and Charles Dickens. The children were also expected to keep up on their school lessons and assigned chores; the boys worked in the store as clerks, the girls in the home.[34] Neighbors were involved and friendly.

Both Caroline and Richard Thomas had an interest in the theater which "never lagged." They built for their children one of America's most well-known "little theatres" by converting the red barn into a playhouse which they named The Barnacle. "Its novelty attracted many and some of America's outstanding players visited it and trod its boards." The playhouse could boast three changes of scenery, footlights, and a mirrored dressing room; all varieties of entertainment were performed there, including a burnt cork minstrel show. As a result of this theatrical diversion, many other interests developed in the Thomas children, but dramatics became an important part of Elbert Thomas's life. He made his first political speech there and did his first acting. Additionally, conventions and political rallies were held, but its fame rested ultimately on being the first children's playhouse west of the Mississippi.[35]

Elbert Thomas was a product of local schools; between 1890 and 1899 he attended the Fourteenth Ward School, the Whittier, and Grant Schools in Salt Lake City, but his learning experiences were not confined to institutionalized education. Before his tenth birthday he accompanied his mother to International Women's meetings and to the International Congress of Religions. He was, he said, "Impressed by a speech of Kinza Hirai, who represented Shinto. I met Mr. Hirai later in Japan. To this day I remember a Hokku poem he quoted: 'There are many roads that lead to the top of the mountain but when once the summit is gained the same moon is seen.'" By this time he had been baptized into the Mormon faith and confirmed as a member of the church. He was, he recalled, "Taught its meaning so positively that my responsibilities seemed great. The impressions I gained have never left me." Already disciplined in his religion as Mormon children are brought up to be, he listened attentively to representatives of many of the world's religions and became convinced that he would become a missionary, "because that is expected of every Mormon boy."[36]

In June of 1893 he turned ten and the year was marked for him by three significant events: the World's Fair, the Panic of 1893, and the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. Taken by his parents to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, he was enjoying the spectacle, including Sol Blum's Midway Plaisance, which offered lower-brow enticements in the form of games and exhibitions, when the Panic broke. (Sol Bloom was later elected to represent the "Silk Stocking District" of New York as a Democrat; meeting him in Washington years later, Thomas said his "midway experiences [were] renewed.") The most serious economic depression in the United States since the Panic of 1873, it was marked by the collapse brought on by railroad overbuilding and

questionable railroad financing that resulted in a series of bank failures. In addition there was a run on the gold supply (relative to silver) that resulted from the American policy of bimetallism to determine the value of the American dollar.

Up until the Great Depression of the 1930s, in which Elbert Thomas would become so deeply involved, it was the worst financial collapse in American history. The economic disaster affected industrial cities, mill towns, farms, and the western silver mines, many of which were closed and never reopened. It also gave birth to "Coxey's Army," the first populist march on Washington by the unemployed from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and several western states who demanded work relief programs. Strikes were called in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois, the most serious of which was the Pullman strike that paralyzed a large segment of the American transportation system, and violence broke out in several parts of the country.[37]

The Thomas family was not untouched. "We left home well to do. We returned, as the books showed when I studied them after my father's death, $164,000 in debt." The impact was not deeply felt, since "credits kept things going," but the lesson was not lost on ten-year-old Elbert. (Several days after submitting his "Spiritual Autobiography" to the Institute for Religious and Social Studies, he wrote to Jessica Feingold, a secretary with the organization, requesting that the phrase "$164,000 in debt" be changed to "thousands of dollars in debt—a debt so heavy that [Richard Thomas] spent the rest of his life in meeting and overcoming it. This fact influenced my life and thought greatly." Should it be too late, he wrote, "Forget it.") He learned, he said, in addition to understand gold, silver, interest, the international relationships of economics, but above all "the meaning of money."[38] And that lesson, he said, was clearer than any that could be derived

from a textbook: “From that day to this I have been certain that the nation that invented the gold standard in order to exploit backward peoples and double investments in the Americas by cutting in half the value of the American dollar would someday suffer for this act.”[39] Jefferson and Lincoln, he had been taught, and his Sunday School teacher had validated it, believed that nations as well as individuals can accumulate a kind of secular karmic debt and will inevitably be called to account. To the end of his life he believed that a rationally managed economy constructed for the betterment of humanity and presided over by ethical leaders could avoid depressions if they devoted energy commensurate with that expended in winning a war.

Richard Thomas and Henry Dinwoody had been appointed as a committee of two to furnish the Salt Lake Temple. Caroline Thomas’s father was one of the stonecutters and since it stood only a block from the family’s store in the center of the city, it became a visible reminder to Elbert that the Mormons are a temple-building people. Prior to its dedication permission had been granted from “the Brethren” to allow hundreds of non-Mormons to tour the interior of the structure, a gesture which Thomas credits with creating a feeling of good will that helped in the campaign for statehood. In any case, the sight of the imposing building planted within the impressionable young man an interest in temples as he “wandered over the earth.” As a ten-year-old young Elbert’s spiritual life was deepened by watching the imposing structure rise. “As kiddies in primary and Sunday school we sang ‘We Want to See the Temple.’ Every Fast Day I took my donation for it. It was indeed a symbol of sacrifice for the whole Mormon people.”[40]

He equated the veneration of temples with the devotion of the Jews to the temple in Jerusalem, which, he believed, contained the “secret of Jewish unity which the Romans

were incapable of understanding." Since the forty years spent in building the Salt Lake Temple had been years of deprivation, turmoil, and uncertainty, he wrote, it was the symbol of the capabilities of the spirit. He also tied the concept of temple-building to the New Deal public works projects that he would foster many years later: an unemployed man is not only an economic liability, he is a danger to community morale. Mormon leaders, he believed, had wisely utilized the participation of the idle in this formidable project in much the same way that Roosevelt had put those frustrated by lack of purpose to work for the betterment of the national community.

"My childhood memories in Utah include the beginnings of political parties there, carpetbagism, the struggles for statehood, and land rushes as Indian reservations were opened . . . Women voted in the Utah Territory." He recalled his mother's efforts to maintain the franchise for women and resist the attempt at the time of the writing of the state constitution to "make our state like most of the other American states when we joined the Union." He was also being given greater responsibilities by his church; at fifteen he and three others were called on a special "mission" to visit neighboring non-Mormons in the hope of bringing them to the Gospel. It was a "heart-breaking assignment if I ever had one," he remembered. "We made no converts. But when assigned to the same task as an older man, he found that his adolescent experience had taught him much. When he was nineteen the stake was divided into four or five larger ones, making leadership scarce and Thomas was appointed a Mutual Improvement Association President—appointed not for his qualities but because he was all that was left. Mormons, he said, "don't like meetings to fail" and thus his classes were attended by two young boys and several old men there out of a sense of obligation. "There I learned

that a teacher could learn much even if he couldn't teach much." Those early tasks, he believed, gave him the courage to take on greater responsibilities in the future.[41]

By 1900 Elbert Thomas had been prepared by the common schools he attended to enter the University of Utah. Having graduated from the Grant School Eighth Grade in 1899, he was qualified since the majority of students were not college grade. Total enrollment exclusive of the summer school in 1900 was 693; 510 of these were high school level. (By the year of Thomas's graduation, for the first time more college than high school students were enrolled. After the 1908-1909 school year preparatory courses were no longer offered.) It was during the opening decade of the twentieth century that the University of Utah was preparing to shed its provincialism, further distance itself from Mormon influence and control, and strengthen through major additions to its programs and facilities its prospects for legitimate standing among its national peer institutions.

Founders' Day in 1899 had been a celebration of the Removal Bill which relocated the University to a sixty-acre site granted by Congress. One legislator remarked that this was "second and second only to the great event of Utah's being a state . . . [that] this institution shall be built on that magnificent hill, overseeing the valley." Although the buildings were incomplete when Elbert Thomas commenced his university career, the new century and the new campus began in a heightened spirit of optimism and promise for a roseate future. There had also been a detectable shift on the part of Utah society toward the realization that its educational obligations extended beyond the elementary and secondary levels. Increased student extracurricular activity kept pace with curricular expansion, and Thomas became enthusiastically involved in both. At a mass meeting on

June 11, 1901, a revamped student organization was created to unify, correlate, and regulate student activities.[42]

As a sophomore he majored in Latin and Greek, but found that the social, biological, and implied religious theories in Marxism and Darwinism, two of the most profound arguments for change in the human world view ever formulated, "did not attract." Marxism, he felt, would inevitably bring about upheaval, dictatorship, and the ultimate destruction of freedom. Of Darwinism he was less skeptical: if united with the concept of progress it could possibly have value, but still he never "became interested."[43]

Outside the classroom Thomas reorganized the students and wrote the first constitution of the Associated Students of the University of Utah, "building that constitution around functional activities." When the constitution became effective, all student activity groups were operating in the red; when Thomas returned several years later to teach, he was gratified to know that "the Constitution had not only survived but it had made the student body a strong, solvent institution," a fact of which he later said he was more proud than his degree. Elected president of the student body, he resigned because he believed it was time to separate university and preparatory students. The constitution provided for student control and discipline and for the student activity fee (the Regents refused to let the students enforce this until after Thomas had graduated). There were few extracurricular activities in which he did not participate; he later said he was embarrassed to list his activities since the expenditure of so much time implied that he did no studying. "The first prom, the first Utonian, the U on the hill, and such other University institutions which you learned to know so well had their origin in my days at the University."[44] That same year, while preparing for the Oxford Rhodes scholarship, a

Mormon patriarch came to his home to give him his "patriarchal blessing" which, he said, gave him another tool to understand events since nations as well as individuals were mentioned.[45]

By 1906 as he was preparing to complete his A. B. in Latin and Greek, he joined the Utah National Guard and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the First Infantry. He would remain active in the Guard for many years and retire with the rank of Major. More important, perhaps, he had met and become attached to a young woman who would become his partner, companion, helpmate, and fellow adventurer for the next thirty-five years. Her name was Miss Edna Harker and they had met at the University because of their common interest in the theatre and dramatics; each had something of a reputation for excellence on the local amateur stage and a passionate desire to serve their church.

Thirty-three years after their marriage in a letter to his daughter Edna Louise ("Miki"), he counseled her on a job she had just landed in order to help pay expenses while her husband went to college. Thomas had mixed feelings noting his "Anglo Saxon heritage" that had precluded his approving of wives working. "In your Mother's case, " he said, "she had a better job than I had when I married her but we very foolishly, I guess but very wisely, I know gave up both jobs and chased off to Japan to mingle among the poor." He cautioned her about coming to a mutual understanding about work and incomes and gave his blessing to her working to "help Lee grow bigger." He and his own young wife may very well have come to the same understanding many years before.[46]

Edna Harker Thomas was born on April 11, 1881, in Taylorsville, Utah, to Benjamin and Harriet Bennion Harker. In 1899 she graduated from the University of

Utah Normal School where she had been active in dramatics and athletics. In 1902 she accepted the call to serve a Latter-day Saint mission in the North Central States and was based in Chicago; when her church obligation was fulfilled, she took an extensive tour of Europe with her brother, sister, and brother-in-law, who had served a mission in Germany. Upon her return she became a teacher in Salt Lake City and later attended eastern schools to specialize in physical education. Returning home she secured a job as an instructor in speech and physical education for women at the University of Utah and started a program of physical examinations for girls. It was here that she met Elbert Thomas as he was finishing up his studies for his A. B.; evenings they met in the University theater where she was leading lady and he was her director. On June 25, 1907, they married in the Salt Lake Temple. There are many things too sacred to talk about, Thomas believed, and the Temple was one. Since it represented the continuity between the earthly and spiritual life, which Mormons believe to be eternal, marriage there carries the promise that a sacredness has been imparted to their union which will manifest itself in prayerful and thoughtful influences to the end of one's life. It also removes the sting that so painfully marks the separation of a loving couple by death, since it promises a continuing relationship on another plane.[47]

Shortly after their marriage they were called to serve a mission in Japan. Actually the call had preceded their union: When you have married Edna Harker you and she may proceed to Japan, church authorities had told him. Thomas had a strong belief in the power of prophecy in LDS leaders as a guide to not only the immediate task but also to the more distant future. When he and Mrs. Thomas were "set apart" for the Japanese mission, they were blessed by Apostles Heber J. Grant and George Albert Smith, both of

whom would later become presidents of the Mormon Church. During the blessing Grant suggested that Thomas would be away for a lengthy period and have many responsibilities, which Thomas later interpreted as prophetic of the many causes and activities in which he would engage in his life. In any case, the young couple set sail for Japan on September 18, 1907, embarking on the first of many adventures in service and sometimes sacrifice—but always in the spirit of expanding their understanding of the world and what they could do, admittedly by their own definitions, to better it.

Endnotes

[16] Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2005), xvii.
[17] Linda M. Zabriskie, "A Chronological History of the University of Utah" (Salt Lake City: American West Center, University of Utah, 1990), Ch. 1850-1869, 3.
[18] Ibid., Ch. 2, 1.
[19]O. N. Malmquist, *The First Hundred Years: History of the Salt Lake Tribune,* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1971, 59.
[20] Ibid., 63, 110.
[21] Ibid., 8.
[22] Ibid, 11.
[23]Ibid., 21.
[24] Ibid., 51-52.
[25] Letter to Frank Jonas, Sept. 13, 1943, Thomas MSS 129, Box 1.
[26] Thomas to Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, "Spiritual Autobiography," Jan. 1950, Thomas MSS 129, Box 1, 1.
[27] Ibid., 5.
[28] Rose Thomas Graham, *Four Forty Three*, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229.
[29] Letter to Jonas, Sept. 13, 1943, 1.
[30] Milton R. Merrill, *Reed Smoot: Apostle in Politics* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1990), 329-330.
[31]Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 699.
[32] Letter to Jonas, 2.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Rose Thomas Graham, *Four Forty Three.*
[36] Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," 6.
[37]Robert H. Zieger and Gilbert J. Gall, *American Workers, American Unions: The Twentieth Century (*Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University , 2002), 21.
[38] Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," 10.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 9-10.
[41] Ibid., 18.
[42] Zabriskie, "A Chronological History of the University of Utah," Chapter 1890-1899, 2-20.
[43] Thomas, Letter to Jonas, September 23, 1943, 2.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," 18.
[46] Thomas, Letter to Edna Louise Thomas, Thomas MSS 129,
[47] Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," 10.

CHAPTER 2

THE EXTENSION OF KNOWLEDGE

On New Year's Day of 1942, Senator Elbert D. Thomas, Democrat of Utah, spoke to the Japanese people via short wave radio in the Japanese language regarding the war that had started with the United States less than one month earlier. You have, he warned them, been betrayed by your warlords and for you this war is unwinnable. No one in a position of authority in the United States could speak to the people of Japan with greater credibility. Inside the political community and out, he was regarded as "the best informed man in the Senate on Far Eastern affairs."[48] He had come by this understanding through direct experience, study, and travel. On September 18, 1907, he and his wife of two months embarked on a five-year mission for their church that would provide them with firsthand knowledge of Japanese culture, religion, and world view, thus broadening their perspectives on Oriental thought and behavior that would forever color their own lives. "Then began one of life's ventures and before it was completed Edna Harker Thomas had become the first lady Mormon missionary to circle the globe."[49]

As noted, Thomas's missionary career had actually started much earlier. At the age of fifteen he and three other boys were assigned to visit all the non-Mormons in the neighborhood. His recollection of being "set apart" with his wife prior to their departure for Japan was emotional for him. As noted above, they were given blessings by Apostles Heber J. Grant and George Albert Smith; both later became presidents of the LDS

church. Before being blessed by Smith, Grant suggested he "be ordained a Seventy," since "Brother Thomas may be away a long time and have great responsibilities." Thomas may have interpreted this as a prophecy, but later remarked that it had no value unless one lived up to one's responsibility: "That cannot be left to God. He only helps you do your best."[50]

The Japan in which they arrived could be compared in significant ways to Great Britain: both were insular societies off the coasts of great land masses, both had created prestigious naval and maritime traditions, had remained free from foreign armed invasions, were governed by monarchies, and were culturally distinctive as a result of the influences of the mainland. But here commonalities with the occidental world ended. Traditionally Japan had resisted any contact with the "Western barbarians," the Tokugawa shogunate having gone so far as to enforce a policy of *kaikin*, or legal isolationism, although limited trade was conducted with China, Korea, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Netherlands. This isolation ended in 1853 with the "black ships" of the United States, which undoubtedly intimidated the Japanese into a compromise with foreigners. In 1868 rebel armies attacked the shogun's palace in Kyoto and brought about the Meiji Restoration, which reinstated the emperor's power. The Restoration marked Japan's recognition that modernization of its society was necessary to survival within the rapidly changing community of nations. One argument for the adoption of Western military technology—"Know one's enemy"—was to avoid China's fate in the disastrous Opium War of the 1840s. *Toyo no dotoku, Seiyo no gakugei* roughly translated into *Eastern ethics, Western technology.* [51] Tradition and divine revelation were rejected in the name of science and secular rationalization, a central education system, mass

communication, a market system, industrialization, and urbanization. Politically the government was marked by broader participation and the acceptance of the nation-state concept in international relations. This new Western-oriented system propelled Japan toward a place of international respect, and 1868 to 1878 was a truly revolutionary decade, marked by increased revenue, a banking and currency system, and, not least of all, a peasant army.[52] Elbert and Edna Thomas settled into their duties in this "modernized" Japan with the intention "not to propagandize, but to educate," he stated in 1944. He met there, Ralph Hann wrote, "Japanese flushed with victories in wars against China and Russia, Russian ex-prisoners of war, who feared to return to their Czar-tyrannized land, Chinese silently resenting occidental domination over their ancient empire."[53]

However, undergirding Japan was an imperial historical continuity supported by political and military family hierarchies, and no other culture had a more heightened consciousness of a unique, self-directed autonomous national identity or a more keen sense of natural aesthetics. The cornerstone, after 1871 government supported and subsidized, was Shinto.[54] Central to that sense was the pervasive influence of this belief system on Japanese thought and character; Japanese art and poetry were entirely dependent upon it. The "Sacred Way" or "Way of the Gods" provided an ideological and emotional force that unified Japan as a nation and as a people. However, it differed from other "conventional" religious constructs in that it provided no complex metaphysical superstructure or elaborate moral code. The Japanese, Ruth Benedict maintains, although often consumed with shame and guilt in their sensitivity to world opinion, seem to exhibit a negligible concern regarding internalized rules relative to right and wrong.[55] The

practice of Shinto required ritual acts performed at designated shrines, and were processes of purification originating in concerns with death, childbirth, illness, and menstruation, which are relative to the strong Japanese concern for personal cleanliness and the denial of access to women to certain holy places.

From the earliest days of his mission, Elbert Thomas set out to study and understand the religious underpinning of Japanese culture in order to better prepare his case for Mormon Christianity as he presented it to prospective converts. Shinto stressed the beauty of nature (again, found in Japanese artistic expression), and shrines were often located near physically beautiful features. Mt. Fuji was holy to the believer as the gods' abode, but also as the "upwelling of a vital nature force." Nowhere in modern history is there such a pronounced example of state sponsorship of religion.[56] Thomas compared his experiences to Pompey's attempt to understand Judaism by going into the temple in Jerusalem which contained the "secret of Jewish unity. . . and when he found himself alone with what he thought was nothingness in the sanctum of the temple, he marveled how nothing could hold a people."[57] His first experience was to solitarily enter a Shinto "shrine deep in the mountains, a shrine with its Torii gates. . .While I was not surprised, as Pompey was, at finding nothing, because my life had sensed the power of a spiritual control, I did learn that spiritual bond held the souls of men we call pagans as it did our own." [58] He observed the fire and water ceremonies of Shinto priests, but Shinto, he remembered, left him "with a hollow feeling."[59]

The second great stream of Japanese religious thought that Christian, and later, Mormon, missionaries were to encounter was Buddhism. Before 1868 and the initiation of measures to create a so-called "modern Japan," Shinto had become subordinate to

Buddhist ritual. Unlike Shinto, Buddhism centered around a messianic figure, had a trained clergy, a unified doctrine and practice, and an emphasis on moral behavior. Buddhism had entered Japan from India via China and Korea and did infuse Japanese culture with Indian and Chinese influences, but Japanese Buddhism became nationalized, a sort of integrated hybrid with Japanese religious traditions.

Buddhist divinities complemented Shinto *kami* (spirits), borrowed from Shinto art and ritual, but did contain a philosophical and metaphysical structure. Its power lay in its teaching that the individual could drive out adversity through rejection of the senses, thereby awakening one to a higher life of compassion for all through meditation and regular devotions. By the Tokugawa era (which ended with the Meiji Restoration in 1868) it had become a virtual arm of the government and played a substantial role in the feudal structure up to the Meiji period. Thomas seems to have warmed more readily to Buddhism because, as he wrote later, "Born and raised in the neighborhood of the temple, Buddhist temples always attracted me." He was fascinated by the symbols he saw there, particularly the swastika, which he remembered seeing on American Indian pottery. "Again world unity came to my mind." In any case, what is probably most revealing here is that, absolute faith and devotion he nurtured for his Mormon faith aside, his mind was open to more fully understanding the traditions of those he had come to teach and hopefully convert. Respect for the belief systems of other cultures would become a hallmark of his personality and a positive personal characteristic that would serve him well throughout his political career, particularly in the relationships he developed outside the United States. This knowledge and understanding would come to be of critical importance when the United States declared war on Japan in 1941. Elbert Thomas would

be recognized as the preeminent Senatorial expert on what most Americans considered their most vicious and formidable enemy.

Confucian and Taoist thought also entered Japan, but their influences were much more subtle and diffuse. Since neither brought religious organization with priests, scriptures, and observances, the Japanese were more concerned with the social ethic and government rational of Confucianism as a system of social conduct. Taoism never achieved the status of an organized religion. Since it lived in fragments of tradition that permeated folk religion, its influence is difficult to trace. Its major impact was felt in cosmological and calendric beliefs and practices.

Christianity had arrived in Japan as a relative latecomer; its battle was uphill from the outset since it emphasized its own distinctness and resisted intermingling with Japanese tradition. Only a small percentage of the population was converted; entering Japan in 1550 with the Portuguese it was only tolerated for a century, after which time it was proscribed until the 1860s. Since that time the extreme proliferation of denominations which arose out of the Euro-American experience was not suitable for Japanese culture, and any optimism for mass conversions that may have accompanied the Meiji westernization proved to be unfounded. Not uncharacteristically, the Jesuits, however, went their own way and determined that the best approach would be to "do as the Romans do." Copying Japanese politeness, manners, and etiquette (including the serving of sake, performing the *chanoyu* tea ceremony, and observing national customs), they were often criticized by other orders for neglecting ends because of undue attention to means.[60]

The Latter-day Saint Japanese Mission had been founded in September of 1901 at Yokohama when Heber J. Grant had dedicated Japan to the preaching of the Gospel. Beginnings, however, were rocky. Indignation was voiced by the Japanese press when Grant made the statement that "honorable men" could take additional wives with the consent of the first. The *Salt Lake Tribune* published an article on November 7, 1901, under the title "Believes in Polygamy: Apostle Heber J. Grant Declares in Interview That Men Should Be Allowed to Take Additional Wives." Bearing a Tacoma dateline, it forced Grant to print numerous letters clarifying the interview and reiterating that Mormons would "not teach polygamy but will fully respect the laws of Japan."[61] Regardless of the Manifesto of 1890, polygamy continued to be the albatross the church was doomed to carry, and prophetic of the storm over the Smoot Senatorial election and seating controversy of 1903.

Because of the difficulty in learning the language and threading through the complexity of Japanese customs, the first missionaries spent eighteen months in study of their surroundings before venturing out to proselytize. Success was slow, and symptomatic of the difficulty of the task. (The mission would eventually close on August 7, 1924, and could claim only 166 baptisms over a 23 year period.) Additionally, the Thomases had arrived during a critical period in the country's history. Still flushed with victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was a modernizing nation in a period of transition.[62] The year before their debarkation on October 12, 1906, 113 rioters had been arrested and scores of people injured in demonstrations against increased streetcar fares and the "unconstitutional behavior" of the bureaucracy; streetcars were damaged and police boxes destroyed.[63] Not to be deterred by the uncertainties of Japanese politics, the

young couple began immediately to organize and coordinate their activities.

Thomas was made Secretary of the Mission on the day he arrived. Since he had been put in charge of his father's store after graduation from the university in 1906 up until his departure for Japan, managerial duties were not new to him, and a good deal of his time was spent seeing to the mundane matters necessary to an efficiently run enterprise, including laundry and housekeeping chores. In a letter to Frank Jonas written in September of 1943, he remembered managing not only the dry goods store but R. K. Thomas realty as well. He spent all his time, he said, on these businesses and recalled that his name was "listed for many years on the company stationery. My father left me in charge of all his business way back in 1900 when he went to Europe."

His duties—and his days—were typically taken up with dealing with servants and the constant attention to protocol. He worried over the low wages his household workers were paid and voiced this concern to his supervisors, hoping in this way to encourage "rainy day savings." Weekly prayer meetings were held and the duties differed little from those in missions anywhere else in the world. Time was spent on Bible lessons, Sunday School classes, visiting teaching, office work, writing, and keeping up his mission journal.[64] Church services followed the typical Latter-day Saint pattern: hymns ("Come, Come Ye Saints," "Did You Think to Pray?" "Jesus of Humble Birth" were favorites) and inspirational talks given by the four missionaries Thomas supervised and what he called "six native saints." Fundamental Mormon doctrine: the progression to godhood, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the apostasy and restoration, the fall of man, the importance of works in achieving worthiness for baptism, the LDS belief in a pre-existence, and eternal life—were the main topics. Mrs. Thomas conducted women's

classes and organized a Mutual Improvement Association group. In 1910 Elbert was named Mission President and remained so for the duration of his stay in Japan.[65]

However, progress was slow; by February 27 of that year, when President Alma O. Taylor visited from the United States, only fifteen Japanese attended the service, but the Thomases did not appear to be discouraged. Mormon gospels and hymns were in the process of being translated, and socialization seems to have been frequent and enjoyable in the form of outings, picnics, and sightseeing. Priesthood meetings and Japanese Bible classes were held, and on Sunday, July 24, the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 was celebrated in this far Oriental outpost of the faithful. Two days later a missionaries' conference was held, but recreation was not neglected. "The Mormon missionary throughout the world today," Thomas wrote, "is recognized as a young college boy interested in athletics. He plays baseball and football where those games are played." The church hierarchy in the postwar world recognized that, Thomas believed, since the boy is living a natural life and doing nothing that interferes with his missionary duties. But not always so: "I not only played baseball and basketball in Japan, but I let my missionaries play and we became well known as a result." Publicity regarding this pursuit generated some negative responses from home. He received a veiled admonition from President Lund: "Brother Thomas, our people make great sacrifices to keep their children on missions and when they read about their playing baseball they wonder if they should not be preaching instead of playing." He was encouraged to "be thoughtful" and decide if such activities were wrong; if so, they should be stopped.[66]

The games continued and a Tokyo-American team made up of ministers, teachers, missionaries, and soldiers was formed. They eventually had a "remarkable fan following," one of whom was Bishop McKim, head of the American Episcopalian Mission in Japan. Thomas, who admitted he was not much of a player, made a lucky catch and throw that won the game. McKim put his arm around Thomas and told him how much they loved to watch "you Mormon boys" play ball. "Some day we may grow up and invite you to come and pray with us." After that, Thomas recalls, the dilemma of to play or not to play was solved. [67]

On September 14 of that year Elbert Thomas made some interesting observations in his diary regarding race and culture relevant to the people among whom he was working. In a discussion of "Israelitish blood," he voiced his belief that the Japanese were genetic relatives to the Jews of the ancient world. This he thought was proven by their receptiveness to the Gospel (but then, he said, so was their "dark hair"). Testimonies came more slowly to the Japanese because of the cultural environment. Years later, in a letter to Frank Jonas he would say that the Japanese outlook was essentially conditioned by China. "China is big; Japan is small; that holds for more than geography." Additionally, he said, the Japanese have very little "Negro blood. They are not cursed as the negro."[68]

The following spring, beginning in March of 1911, Thomas left his home base in the company of Elder Jay C. Jensen with whom he visited other Japanese cities to determine their fitness for missionary work. Kobe and Mojii, both large seaports, were rejected, as was Nara. Kyoto was assessed as being "too strongly Buddhist" and contained too many temples; nevertheless, attending a festival there they found the city to

be “wide awake” and commercial. Osaka, however, was assessed as “prosperous,” with a “better appearing class” of “well dressed . . . above average” people, all of which were deemed “good” qualities. Osaka was also an industrialized manufacturing city where Christian “plantations” might take root. Kumamoto and Kogoshima likewise received positive reviews, both being “prosperous and thrifty, as was Matsuyama, the “cleanest” of the cities they visited. Hiroshima had possibilities they decided, but again was too strongly Buddhist; it had also been a forwarding station for troops in the Russo-Japanese War and contained many military and government storehouses.” There is no mention of action taken regarding missionary work in these cities in Thomas’s papers, not surprisingly since he left Japan the following year. (Also, as noted above, the Japanese missionary effort came to an end because of disappointing conversion statistics in 1924.) Although he does not mention being in Tokyo on this trip, he does say that in 1911 in that city he had met Sun Yat Sen and his associates, including an artillery student, Chiang Kai-shek. All, he said, were students of the American Revolution. He also points out Thoreau’s influence on Gandhi and the fact that Trotsky had lived for a time in the United States, although “it didn’t seem to have influenced him much.” “When I began the interpretation of history,” he stated, “I found that the Orient and my experiences in the Orient were so strong that I never left it out of my lectures or writings.”[69]

Much of the discussion that took place in General Conference in May of 1911 centered around protecting the church’s reputation regarding women. Male missionaries were admonished to maintain the strictest of decorum with all females. Mormon missionaries had been accused of inappropriate and even illegal behavior in rumors that claimed girls were being smuggled by them from Europe into America. “We cannot,”

Thomas stated, "bend our religion to meet Japanese ideas" since that would lead to apostasy.[70]

By 1912 both Thomases were becoming nostalgic for home, and their copious correspondence reveals such. In an August 14 letter to Alma O. Taylor, Fred A. Caine, and William Fairbourn, "Esquires, Undertakers, Benedicts, Slaves of the Sugar Trust, and likely a few other things etc etc Zion and Elsewhere," he wrote, "Nothing has happened and there is no news. I'm d ___ well, thank you." It had been a record year mission work done, but he predicted the "worst year [for baptisms] we had had since I came to Japan. But still Japan and things Japanese . . . are attractive." The couple felt enough affinity to their Japanese experience to name their first child, a daughter born December 25, 1910, "Chiyo," translated from Japanese as "a thousand years of blessings."

Increasingly his thoughts turned to Utah in general and politics in particular. In the same letter he wrote, "Ten years ago a few other good well-meaning Democrats spotted a certain man and said that he ought to be the President of the United States. Well, in the course of time Mr. Bryan came to think just like we did and now as a result our candidate is at the head of the Democratic ticket. . . I would like to be home and elect Wilson. How are the political whispers at home now? Are we to stand for four more years of Spry and the Federal Bunch? It seems to me that it is about time for Utah to go Democratic."[71]

In 1911 the Emperor of Japan died; Thomas noted the elaborateness of the ritual, the secrecy, and the inaccessibility to the common people. There also seems to have been a general epidemic of anti-Mormonism. One English paper in Japan was so vitriolic that Thomas complained to the editor (who begged off.) "O how long," he wrote, "will we

have to wait before we will be able to see a little bit of truth about our people?"[72] The same year the Minister of the Interior of Japan invited all religious leaders of the various practicing sects to a conference; Thomas was in attendance. In his opening remarks the Minister expressed his belief that Japan was in need of a comprehensive religion to strengthen its developing nationalism and called upon the attendees to create one. The official, not fully understanding the basis of revelation-based religion, had to be apprised of this aspect of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Thomas replied, "Our religion is not made by man but by God. We believe that our religion is the best religion for the Japanese people. Therefore, we can take no part in trying to work out another." It was, he later said, perhaps "harsh, but in the logic of authoritarian religions it is inevitable."[73]

By October of 1912 the Thomases were anxious to return home; they were visited by Presidents Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, and released. "We will leave the mission in good condition," Thomas felt, and the decision to return home via Europe was made, since it was cheaper. "I leave," he said, "with no regret as far as our work is concerned." Growth had been slow but steady, he thought, and the people good, but both "our nerves have become bad." The couple looked forward to the journey as a sort of repair. They had given up a good deal they "counted dear," they believed, including a graduate degree, a good job, the commission in the National Guard, and were behind their contemporaries in getting started in life, but, he wrote, "To me our mission has been well worthwhile. [Sic]" He had indeed accomplished much. He had traveled throughout the Empire spreading the Mormon faith and Mormon tracts. He taught English to students of the Japanese War College and became fluent enough in Japanese to speak and write articles for Japanese magazines. He authored a Mormon tract in

Japanese, *Sukui No Michi (The Way of Salvation)*, and later told Frank Jonas in 1943 that the book was used as tracting literature and appealed to the Japanese because the "book is couched in Japanese experience and the argument is made in accordance with Eastern religions instead of our Western religions. He wrote 300 pages of addresses and other writings dealing with Gospel themes (which were translated into the Japanese colloquial for oral reading and later into the written language), and supervised the translation of the Mormon hymnal. In his final address, an emotional leave taking for he had come to love many of the Japanese with whom he had worked and lived for five years, he encouraged fidelity among the believers, condemned apostasy, cautioned them to pay their tithing, observe the Word of Wisdom, and to study and pray. "Be, I repeat it," he said, "the saviors of Japan."[74]

Receiving their itinerary on October 7, 1912, the Thomases embarked from Yokohama and passed through Shanghai, Hong Kong, Port Said, and Jaffa. At Port Said they enjoyed a nineteen day tour of the Nile and Luxor. In Cairo he wrote (although by 1950 he had forgotten what stimulated it) a sentence that later in life seemed appropriate to him: "Religions generally are broad but religionists often narrow. Their cocksureness is the egotism of the ignorant." For some reason, he mused, the sentence seemed to reflect him and what he had been through, but he was then—and many years later—unable to explain it. "Some religions I have known are very narrow and some religionists so broad they did not seem to care, know, or understand anything. But some were narrow even to meanness without having any reason to be."[75] One could speculate that his Japanese experience combined with this opportunity to observe the world outside Utah firsthand had begun to inspire in him a broadness and generosity of thought regarding the

belief systems of others that would later increase his effectiveness as a politician, one who centered his actions and activism around very humanistic concerns in as objective a way as possible considering the context of the time.

From Jaffa they took a seven-day rail trip to Palestine, where they visited Jerusalem, Jericho, the Dead Sea, and the Mount of Olives—much of their traveling time on donkeys. The Holy Land held special meaning for him, and he described a "temple experience" he had at Jerusalem. Having seen a group of Russian pilgrims, he noted that he had seen in this highly significant religious city "the conflict of beliefs." He went to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and Gordon's tomb, which inspired in him "thoughtful musings." "I had wandered over most of the land but the evening that Palestine impressed me most was when Mrs. Thomas and I sat on the Mount of Olives and looked across the valley to the place of the temple and the Mosque of Omar. While our baby gathered pebbles, we read the dedicatorial prayer offered by Orson Hyde on October 21, 1841, when the land of Palestine was dedicated by a Mormon elder sent by the Prophet Joseph Smith to dedicate Palestine to the return of the Jews. Here again deep, meaningful long-range spiritual understanding entered my soul." At the time of this experience, the Jewish future in Palestine was doubtful; there were perhaps only between 50 and 60,000 Jews in the Holy Land, and a few were returning there for burial. Thomas would become a passionate Zionist and a vocal supporter of the State of Israel, especially after World War II, largely based on his belief in the Mormon prophecy that the Jews would return. It was this first contact with the land of Hebrew antiquity that made him "more than a mere observer of what to me is the fulfillment of God's promises."[76]

Before leaving Japan they had deposited 1750 dollars in the Walker Brothers bank in order to draw on it. Traveling second class (which included portage, meals, and guides—gratuities were extra) they virtually covered Europe, seeing Marseilles, Geneva, Milan, Genoa, Naples, Rome, Venice, Vienna, Dresden, Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, Brussels, Paris, Calais, Dover, and London. (They were prevented from visiting Greece because of the Greco-Turkish War.) But he pragmatically recognized that he must now begin to plot out a career future that would provide financial security for his family. (Mrs. Thomas had written letters to Japanese friends describing the trip home, but she was also afflicted with seasickness and worried a great deal about money.) In a telegram sent on January 22, 1913, he contacted the Dean of the Harvard Graduate School requesting an interview and outlining his experiences as a missionary, his travels in Europe, and his need for a teaching assistantship in order to attend graduate school. "I should like to teach," he said, and enumerated his knowledge of the Japanese language, Eastern life, customs, and history; Chinese and Japanese religion and philosophy; economics, English, and Latin. That same day he wired President Joseph Kingsbury at the University of Utah. Although the University was not ready, he felt, to offer the sophisticated curricula of Harvard, he offered to teach freshman and sophomore history, economics, banking, business, English and Latin. In addition he contacted the universities of Chicago, Pennsylvania, California at Berkeley, Michigan, and Columbia; Yale he crossed off his list.[77]

Many years later he would recall that his going to work at the University of Utah came about by accident. Unprepared academically to teach in public or high schools since he had taken no classes in education, he said that the University was "probably the only

school I could teach in." Coincidentally an Associate Professor of Latin and Greek had passed away at the time he arrived home and he was offered the position. He "did so and stayed for twenty years." His duties at the University of Utah would be many and diverse. In addition to teaching classical languages for two years, he became registrar, secretary-registrar, and secretary to the Regents. Circumstances more than any other thing, he told Jonas in a letter dated Sept. 13, 1943, made him an administrative officer. "I do not know why I was appointed Secretary to the Board of Regents and Secretary of the University excepting that my business experience made my appointment a natural one."

"I was not an active participant in the University trouble in 1915 and 1916. I was President of the Alumni Association for 1913 and 1914, and in the President's address of 1914 hints of the coming troubles were expressed."[78] The "troubles," as Thomas refers to them, were troublesome indeed, focusing negative national attention on the University of Utah, dividing the community, embittering supporters, alienating outsiders, and inspiring heated debate on the nature and limitations of academic freedom in higher education. The seriousness of the episode and the cryptic and abbreviated reference that Thomas makes to it warrants a brief examination in this context.

Statehood, rapid growth in both the state and the University, and the removal to the bench campus inevitably created tensions that President Joseph T. Kingsbury was ill-prepared to resolve. Additionally, the President was seen as isolated from the faculty and unmindful of (and unresponsive to) their concerns. Delivering a commencement address to the class of 1914, graduating senior Milton H. Seavy had called for a more progressive and modern outlook from what many students viewed as an ultra-conservative administration and legislature. Governor Spry, who had been in the audience, was

offended by the speech and ordered Kingsbury to inquire lest an equally offended legislature respond with economic reprisal. When Seavy was questioned, he maintained that the thoughts were his own and that several instructors had gone over the address before he delivered it, but only for technical and mechanical reasons. Nevertheless, Kingsbury dismissed four staff members without hearing or cause. The students and Alumni Association were outraged, but the Board of Regents refused any compromise and reiterated their right to interfere in course content, which by now had become the issue. Seventeen more resigned in protest; the Board remained silent.

The national publicity generated by the episode triggered the first investigation by the newly formed American Association of University Professors. Arthur Lovejoy of Columbia traveled to Utah, conducted said investigation, and ultimately concluded, among other things, that the firings were groundless, the result of a Kingsbury-Board of Regents vendetta, and charged the Board with duplicity. As a result, policy was changed with the formation of a seven member committee that would form a council to determine policy, have oversight of employment, maintain open records and vest increased legislative power in the faculty. Kingsbury was demoted to President Emeritus and professor of chemistry. None of those who had resigned were reinstated, but frantic recruitment efforts did result in a full staff for the 1915-1916 school year.[79]

There is no indication from Thomas as to why he stood on the sidelines throughout this disturbing period; it does not seem characteristic of him to avoid taking a stand with (or against) his colleagues. In 1944 he would tell a reporter “I’m unpopular with lots of people.” He had never been reluctant to take a stand in the name of his principles, regardless of the potential repercussions and he was anything but an ethical

coward. “I was,” he told Jonas, “the only member of the Ancient Language Department that did not resign during the trouble. I had my office for several years with president Kingsbury in the late 20s and early 30s, and I think that I know as much as anyone about the University difficulty but still it is a complex subject with me and I do not understand all of the details.”[80]

Having been in a position to hear all that was discussed and to see the unfortunate effects the controversy had not only on the University but on the community as well, and given his not inconsiderable intellectual and analytical gifts, it is difficult to assess his action (or lack thereof) with any degree of accuracy. Assuredly he understood the situation fully. It is possible that he was looking forward to a graduate career to strengthen his educational credential, and, planning to return to the University when he had finished, wanted to burn no bridges. However, his leave was still seven years in the future, and it would be nearly a decade before he completed his doctorate and returned to Utah. In any case, he has left no clue as to why he did not act on behalf of his beleaguered fellow teachers, who were clearly in the right—and standing up for what was ethically sound was a hallmark of his political activism and personal behavior.

In 1916, in accordance with President Woodrow Wilson’s preparedness campaign, he was made chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs which was in charge of all the war training done at the University. (As noted above, he had been commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Utah National Guard before leaving for Japan. In addition to the Guard, where he rose to the rank of Major, he was a Major in the United States Reserve.) When it became increasingly obvious that the United States would become involved in World War I, these positions became more involved and

expansive.[81] Through the National Research Council, University representatives voiced their solidarity with President Wilson through the passage of a resolution in which they "[renewed and reaffirmed] our faith in the American institution of which we are a part," and pledged "loyalty to the flag and the constituted guardians and defendants, the Governor of our State and the President of the United States." Committees were formed and changes made, including the discontinuation of courses in elementary German. In his "Spiritual Autobiography," Thomas wrote, "During the first world war [sic] I was able to convince our legislature that outlawing the teaching of German in our schools would not contribute to winning the war. This made me very unpopular as I was in the Second World War [sic] when I urged the acceptance of Nisei in the Army by enlistment through the draft." Ultimately forty-six University of Utah men died in France, leading General Pershing to note that a greater percentage of University of Utah men left to participate in the war than any other like institution in the country. [82] "In the first World War it became one of my duties to suggest certain Mormons when the Army became willing to commission as chaplains three or four Mormon elders," Thomas recalled.

He continued his efforts as chair of the Senate Military Affairs Committee during World War II by sponsoring a bill to give general officers rank in the Army to Chief of Chaplains. While conceding that he had no authority to appoint men in either Army or church, he was asked to make recommendations and it represented for him "a really remarkable culmination in the recognition of our Church. . . I knew also the feelings which the national government might have in regard to recognizing a Mormon elder as a properly trained minister."[83]

In any case, it appears that by the end of World War I he intended to make the University of Utah his career and recognized that an advanced degree was one of the necessary avenues that he must take in order to achieve that goal. He was offered a teaching fellowship at the University of California at Los Angeles, and 1922 found him and his family, which now included two more daughter (Esther, born on May 7, 1913, and Edna Louise on March 16, 1918) transplanted to the West Coast. He was devoted to his children and expressed his appreciation of them in a letter to Edna Louise (whom they called Miki) in March of 1940. ". . . None of our kiddies, Chiyo, Esther, or yourself, ever imposed upon my office or my position. It was an all-time record, I think, that you maintained while I was at the University. Never once did one of you ever want to play with the typewriter when you were little and probably not a single one of you ever bothered anybody in any of the offices all the time we were there. I think that is exceptional and I'm awfully proud when I think back and know that the exception was so strikingly fine. When I used to see other men's children . . . some of them rude enough to come right into important meetings, I used to be mighty thankful for my type of kids."[84] His life at home seemed to be peaceful and pleasant, and Edna and Elbert, caring deeply for each other, worked toward a common goal with little or no discernible disagreement. In 1929 she wrote in her diary, "Tomie has always been such a wonderful husband to me, always. Oh, may I ever be worthy of the great love which he bestows upon me so continually. . . I have been truly blessed all my life . . . mother, brother, sisters, best of all my own husband and 3 [sic] darling daughters."[85]

He had graduated from the University of Utah under a free elective system, which he said was "in vogue for just a few years after 1900 in American universities." When he

presented his credits it was discovered that he had a major in history in addition to Latin and Greek; he chose political science as his discipline at the University of California at Los Angeles.[86] He taught courses in that area from 1922 to 1924 while pursuing his graduate studies.

The influence of Oriental thought and cultural exposure, coupled with his own study and intellectual analysis, became evident in his choice of topic for his doctoral program. Because of this work he was consequently honored with an executive membership in the American Council of Learned Societies. His life in the Far East inspired these interests and during his tenure as an instructor at the University of Utah he had organized courses dealing with Asia ". . . in a study of Japanese history and culture and Japanese institutions [it] is, of course, necessary to understand Chinese institutions, history, and culture. With the exception of the Mikado cult in Japan up until the near present her philosophy and her political thought were based upon Chinese philosophy and thought. Her Buddhism [sic] religion is Northern [Mahayana] Buddhism which came to Japan by way of China. I am sure that my studies, my writings, and my teaching experiences, plus the fact that all things basic in Japanese culture are Chinese that my outlook has been conditioned more by China than by Japan."[87]

His graduate committee was chaired by Professor Raymond Garfield Gettell; in preparation for writing the dissertation he participated in seminars for his major field that included American government, political theory, international law, Chinese political development, international relations in the Far East, and American constitutional law. Minoring in Oriental languages, he studied the history of Buddhism, Japanese political development, and advanced Japanese language.[88]

He entitled his dissertation *Early Chinese Political Thought: a Study Based Upon the Principal Thinkers of the Chou Period.* In introducing his topic, he wrote that most studies on the subject over the previous half century had been found wanting since the conclusions that had been drawn had not been arrived at through exact thinking and research. Too often, he believed, political thought in Chou China had been confused with ethics and religion and had produced a confused muddle of unsatisfactory theories. He had chosen the Chou period, the longest dynasty in Chinese history spanning nearly a thousand years, because of the variety of political theories ranging "from anarchy to absolutism and from feudalism to a proposal for an organization of a league of nations to do away with war." This vast array of political conceptions, he felt, had created "an historical laboratory for testing theories in relation to the science or art of government. The aim of the thesis has been to show that the Chinese developed political theory, to describe the institutions that evolved in connection with that theory, and to attempt to show the results of that theory upon the life of China and, to a degree, its relations to the political thought of the Western world."[89] . . . my idea," he told Frank Jonas in a letter dated September 22, 1943, was to bring an appreciation of Eastern thought into our Western educational scheme. Practically all of my life I have thought in terms of the great universals."

If one looks briefly at the Chou period, it is not difficult to assess why the subject appealed to Thomas's political, historical, and ethical sensibilities, and reveals to a degree how he felt about "good government" and its relationship to moral behavior. The Chou had overthrown the Shang, China's first dynasty for which there is reliable archaeological evidence, in 1045 B. C. E. and ruled China until 221 B. C. E., when it

collapsed during the Age of Warring States and was conquered by the Qin, who unifed China under the first emperor, Shi Huangdi, and gave China its name. Chou administration was centered around bureaucratically administered principalities and an hereditary aristocracy; the king was considered the representative of Heaven. "In acquiring the art of government there can be no separation in the ethical, moral, and political teachings, for the aim is to develop an attitude of complete responsibility on the part of the officials, not only for themselves and their acts, but also for the people," Thomas wrote. "The secret in acquiring success in the art of government is in learning the laws of life and nature, getting in harmony with the great scheme of things, and then directing the people in accordance with those laws."[90] Should he be corrupt or inept, the people were entitled to rise in revolution, one of the philosophical cornerstones of the Chinese belief in the Mandate of Heaven and the Dynastic Cycle theory of history, which the Chou had used to justify their overthrow of the Shang. Bearing a close resemblance to the Lockean theory of contractual government, it was invoked throughout Chinese history from the second century B. C. E. to the twentieth C. E. and the era of Chairman Mao. Unlike the mercurial and often capricious gods of ancient Greece and Mesopotamia, China's concept of "Heaven" was essentially benevolent, devoted to harmony and balance (*yin* and *yang*) influenced by positive human action. Out of the desire on the part of Chinese intellectuals to find a way to bring order out of the chaos into which China had fallen by the third century B.C.E. arose Confucianism, the political and ethical system that would direct Chinese, and indeed Asian, society for the next two thousand years. Impatient with the metaphysical and skeptical of "Heaven," Kung Fu-tzu grudgingly advised the people to believe in the gods if they must, but to keep them at

arms' length. Implicit (and explicit) in the philosophy was the central idea that the ruler should provide a moral example, and that if each individual followed his personal destiny, society would prosper as a whole. Contemporary with Confucianism and its rigid work ethic, another philosophy developed that was also intended as an antidote to the disordered world of the waning dynasty. Taoism approached fate and nature by providing a framework of explanation for the popular level of society, the majority of China's people who were impatient with intellectual sparring in a world which to them presented a daily struggle with the harsh necessities of life. Yet a gap still existed—and into this gap would flow the third great stream of Chinese thought that dealt with concepts of sorrow and solace and the mystery of the hereafter: Buddhism.[91]

All of these approaches to gaining a greater understanding of the human experience and using that knowledge to make life as ordered and just as possible for the greatest number of people were influential in completing the world view that Elbert Thomas had been shaping since childhood. In 1950 he remembered that process having its genesis in Japan. "Life to me is merely a learning process. I have never held back from new experiences. All seemed to be part of my education. On arrival in Japan I decided not to read foreign books about Japan but to learn from my own experiences. This may have been a mistake but it has kept me objective. Had I not assumed that attitude never would I have braved Chinese and Japanese scholarship in my interpretation of Confucius. Had I not done this [the] political East would have remained in my mind what Western writers had said it was."[92]

The strongest challenge to his religion, which was revelation based, he confronted in a debate with a Japanese Confucian scholar. He came away feeling that a conflict

existed between such a religion and one based on wisdom, for his intellectual opponent was an "honest believer" in Confucianism and stated that a peaceful world could only be achieved by adherence to Confucian naturalism. Revelatory beliefs he attacked because, he said, they guaranteed "strife, and even war . . . because men must be loyal to what is revealed to them from God. To die for a belief is the most honored duty western civilization has produced." He honored Thomas for spending the "best part" of his life to travel so far from home to teach his religion, as he honored the West in general for its "unselfish interest in all men. But I do not believe it is unselfish. I believe it is a selfish interest which you believe is necessary to prove your loyalty to God."[93] (It is interesting to note that Thomas implies that Confucianism is a religion, since Confucius himself adamantly denied any connection between his ethical system and religious beliefs of which he was skeptical. Man was incapable of understanding himself, let alone the gods, he thought.)

He left their exchange thoughtful and somewhat confused. When he returned he explained that the religious peace that existed in America was a result of the separation of church and state and the guarantee of freedom of religion, tracing the saga of European religious strife and persecution and admitting that we "still had a long way to go." The response was appreciative but not admiring; if I become as you are, the Confucian told Thomas, "I shall perhaps become a martyr. But if you become a Confucian . . . what you believe is merely Confucius' opinion and you need never die for that. Your loyalty is only the loyalty to a friend's heart." Thomas would never waiver from a deep belief in his Mormon faith, but his Oriental experiences and comprehensive examination of the "great universals" led him to ultimately commit himself to the evolution of tolerance into

appreciation, both of which would serve him well in a political career during which he would interact with many of the world's people who represented beliefs and cultures very different from his own.[94]

With his dissertation accepted and his degree in hand, it was time to return home and begin work in Utah in earnest. (His work would be published, virtually intact, in 1927, and become a standard work in Chinese-Oriental studies.) His testing of the waters of politics in 1920 had not been successful, as explained below, but his interest had not waned—the political arena and the contests that took place therein had been part of his life virtually since birth, but it would take the worst financial disaster in American history, yet a few years down the road, to place him on the national stage.

Endnotes

[48] Press release, author unknown, Thomas MSS 129, Box 1.
[49] Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," Thomas MSS 129, Box 1, 6.
[50] Ibid., 20-23.
[51] W. G. Beaseley, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990). 24.
[52] Harry Wray, *Japan Examined: Perspectives on Modern Japanese History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 19-22.
[53] Ralph Hann, "Tomorrow and Thomas," *Reader's Scope*, no p., date, Thomas MSS, Box 1.
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CHAPTER 3

GOOD GOVERNMENT

"My first political speech was delivered in 1898," Thomas wrote in his correspondence with Frank Jonas. ". . . I had been active in politics practically all my life. [That year] I talked from the same platform with Senator King. I, of course, was not old enough to vote but I did make speeches, and in 1920 the Democratic Party nominated me for Secretary of State. There was no work done to gain the . . . nomination; my name merely was presented to the convention and I won the nomination on the first ballot. I ran very well, some eight thousand votes ahead of the candidate for governor, but was defeated in the Harding landslide. It was the record made in this election that attracted in 1932 the attention of one or two men who are called politicians."[95] Political discussion of contemporary issues—from women's suffrage to Bryan and free silver—were as much a part of his childhood as books, church, and amateur theater. When his name was placed in nomination for a senatorial seat by a former student at the Democratic State Convention in the summer of 1932, he was characterized as "a creative historian," and a "candid defender of the common man," but more significantly perhaps he would over the next eighteen years come to personify the differences that marked the definition and function of government before and after the Roosevelt era.[96]

Prior to his departure for California and graduate school, he had made his name known in Democratic circles. He had "been mentioned for Governor quite often" prior to

the 1932 election, but his first real experience was in 1920. Nineteen-twenty was indeed a Republican year; Utah voters, along with the rest of the nation, overwhelmingly voted for the man who promised "a return to normalcy." (Cynics implied that since 1920 was the first year women could legally vote nationwide, Harding had an edge because females were taken with his strikingly good looks.) Utah reflected a national trend of sixteen million to nine million votes in favor of Warren G. Harding, and the vote was interpreted as something of a referendum on American participation in the League of Nations. The strong Republican trend in Utah reflected minimal support for the League in Utah. Many analysts also interpreted the election as a rejection of the reformism of the Progressive Era.[97]

The previous year had been tumultuous: the wartime economic boom had collapsed, arguments over World War I treaties dragged on, wars and revolutions overseas contributed to an isolationist impulse in the United States. Additionally, domestic unrest, including strikes in steel and meatpacking, race riots, and ethnic conflicts that foreshadowed concerns regarding terrorism and radicalism, all contributed to a weakening of the Wilsonian legacy. Both parties had fielded dark-horse candidates in the presidential election (Franklin D. Roosevelt was the Democratic nominee for Vice President), but Harding, with an almost four to one spending advantage, defeated fellow Ohioan James M. Cox in the largest popular vote margin (60.3% to 34.1%) between the "Era of Good Feelings" and Lyndon Johnson's crushing victory over Barry Goldwater in 1964.[98] Harding's election also ushered in what Scott Fitzgerald called the decade of America's "grandest, gaudiest spree," presided over by three Republican presidents whose attitudes reflected the party's support for (and from) a business community that

seemed to imply a prosperity that would have no limits. This prosperity, however, as the decade progressed clearly did not touch all strata of American society, nor did it extend itself onto Utah's economic landscape. Elbert Thomas would encounter first-hand the hardships and frustrations of the working poor as a Major in the Utah National Guard when called out by the governor to deal with the Carbon County coal strike in 1922.

"The suffering and dislocation of the [Spanish flu] epidemic," Dean May wrote, "seemed to presage the economic gloom that would characterize most of the next two decades." The cutback in defense spending and the revival of European agriculture had contributed to plunging Utah into a serious depression, but the real culprit was the drop in mine production. By 1919 gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc had dropped to 54 percent below their 1918 levels, and by 1921 Utah Copper had closed down. Six thousand were laid off or transferred from the Bingham operations, resulting in a 50 percent population loss in Arthur, Garfield, and Magna. The mining depression of the 1920s was not confined to Utah, but reflected a nationwide trend related in part to the transition to diesel and natural gas as fuel in preference to coal.[99]

Coal had been the major catalyst for Carbon County development and had resulted in the importation of immigrant labor; Helper called itself the community of "57 varieties." After the completion of the transcontinental railroad, Union Pacific had bought up Mormon railroads and monopolized the coal supply as well after 1869, but the corporation faced several challenges. Labor, mostly foreign-born, had been sold a bill of goods by labor agents in Italy, China, Finland, Greece, the Balkans, Japan, and Mexico. Some came as strikebreakers but joined the union; the result was a polyglot ethnic mix unique to Utah. Miners were also the victims of short weights, company towns and stores

with sky-high prices, safety issues, and a probusiness judiciary. A drive for union recognition had resulted in repeated strikes in six different episodes between 1883 and 1922. The Carbon County shut-down into which Major Elbert Thomas was called was part of a nationwide strike in both the bituminous and anthracite fields. Six hundred fifty thousand miners went out, but Utah members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) were not included. Carbon County workers joined when informed they were facing a 30 percent wage cut. According to an editorial in *Outlook* magazine on September 6, 1922, "the difficulty in reaching a settlement seems more and more to be not so much on the question of wages, the nominal cause, as in fixing the method of deciding that and other questions now and in the future." Utah's strike began in a new mine east of Sunnyside in the Gordon Creek district and reflected the economic dislocation of the state in the 1920s. Strikers and company guards were killed and the Utah National Guard was called to the coal fields. In any event, it gave Thomas perhaps his first unadulterated glimpse into the often grim and impoverished world of American labor.[100]

"By my time," Thomas remembered, "the Welsh and English coal miners who had been converted by missionaries sent to the British Isles by Brigham Young were old men, but a few remained and were earnest members of the Church." According to his recollection twenty-eight years after the fact, all of Utah's mines were placed under martial law when he was called as a Major in the National Guard to "represent our Governor." Since the governor had forbidden meetings or gatherings of any kind, schools and Sunday schools did not meet. An old man, Brother Llewellyn, thinking Thomas was a Welsh name, came to plead the case for the Sunday schools. He responded that

although the governor's orders had to be obeyed, he did not think Sunday school meetings would get him in trouble with the Statehouse. Children were not the only ones in attendance; labor leaders came to get a look at him. "One of them went off saying, 'It was interesting to see Major Thomas standing there talking about the Golden Rule but never taking his hand off his gat.'"[101]

He believed that the incident caused the workers to see him in a different light—as a man of religion. When "these people away from a priest" had a death in the family, they became, he said, "hysterical." Having never been faced with such a situation, he was at a loss, but felt that any comfort he could give them would be the result of "righteous thinking" and that no church would "chastise" him for taking on responsibility that was not technically his. He told all those who came to him to go home in peace, that a priest could not immediately be reached because of distance, but that he would do his best for them as he had for the "Sunday school kiddies." Whether his action was right or wrong he could not say, but the people were grateful and did find some solace in his words. Shortly thereafter he left Utah for California and graduate school.[102]

Back in Utah in 1924, he was employed again by the University, but his administrative duties ended and he confined himself strictly to the classroom. Recognition of his scholarly abilities began to accumulate and he was chosen for membership in numerous professional societies. In 1926 he was sent to Europe with other distinguished American professors to study international law and relations, attending the Institute at the seat of the World Court in the Hague, Geneva, and Paris. He had delivered a speech: "World Unity Through the Study of History" in which he contended that wars, revolts, disease, and famine are due to conflicting national interests. "Peace is

indivisible," he pointed out, and whenever trade is free, peace is inevitable. The thesis was published as a monograph by the Carnegie Institute and he was accepted as an advanced theorist by academics in international law. Four times the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace recognized Thomas's ability and conferred on him the responsibility of teaching courses related to the Far East and Latin America.[103]

In 1927 his book *Chinese Political Thought* was published, and for the first time in 1928 his name appeared in the British *Who's Who* (only one other Utahn had been chosen for this honor). In 1929 he was a guest lecturer at the University of Washington in political science and history, and in 1930 listed in the Salt Lake *Telegram* as one of Utah's ten greatest living citizens. A member of the second, third, and fourth Conferences of Teachers of International Law in 1925, 1928, and 1933, he also served as Vice Chairman of the Jefferson Memorial Commission, a member of the American Society of International Law, and would win the Oberlander Award in German-American relations (which provided study time in Germany), became Vice President of the American Political Science Association, a member of the Chinese Political and Social Science Association, the American Oriental Society, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, and a member of the American Association of University Professors.[104]

Increasing his scholarship and teaching, he became more attuned to social improvement. Blending Eastern and Western thought, he projected old issues and new ideas back in history, making them relevant to contemporary times which he saw as deteriorating while the government pursued what seemed cavalier policies about the grim economy facing Utah laborers and farmers. Because agriculture suffered the greatest long-term distress, for Utah the coming hardship of the 30s was in some ways nothing

new. State government, fraught with its own problems, took what Thomas believed to be a somewhat schizophrenic approach to relief in the areas of employment and education. Forty-five percent of the population over the age of ten was gainfully employed, which was five percent below the national average. Legislation reflected traditional Utah conservatism and genuine concern over the degeneration of society; peaceful picketing was prohibited and the minimum wage for women was repealed. The labor unions were broken during the decade. By the end of the 1920s the Utah federation of labor existed in name only. Per capita income for 1929 stood at $537, which was $150 below the national average. Overall the "Prosperity Decade" was clearly not prosperous in Utah.[105]

For Elbert Thomas, his political interests shifted increasingly toward a desire to make political theory practical reality. Nevertheless, there were faint stirrings of what was going on in the 1920s in other parts if the country. More rural areas had received electricity and surfaced roads, modern conveniences and labor saving devices were seen in Utah households, and in 1925 radio station KZN became KSL. Some of the change was disturbing to the older generation particularly. After World War I a desire on the part of University of Utah students to enter the mainstream of national colleges and universities by adopting many traditions established by old Eastern schools began to emerge. The world had indeed grown smaller and in staid and conservative Salt Lake City the *Deseret News* castigated youth for the "objectionable features of social dancing," which specifically included "dresses immodestly short or low cut, cosmetics, gossip [and] slang."[106]

However, the frenetic escape into clothes, parties, dancing, illegal liquor, and the new-found sexual freedom provided by the increasing proliferation of automobiles in

American society was bravado, a whistling in the dark—and to a large degree an anesthetic that dulled the memories of a war whose carnage forever altered the ways in which men would view military conflict and each other. But beneath the escapism, the veneer of infinite prosperity, and the surety of continuous growth lay an economic infrastructure built on sand. By October of 1929 the house of cards was ready to collapse. No one, from his vantage point on a university campus and as a student of history, economics, and politics, was better equipped to astutely observe that something in American society was going seriously awry, than Elbert Thomas, and it had little to do with bobbed hair, shortened skirts, or sexual exhibitionism. The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol, went into effect in January of 1920 and became a metaphor on the schizophrenic decade of heightened cultural tensions, the enshrinement of organized crime, and fears of atheism, immorality, radicalism, and a rejection of "traditional American values." Ultimately the legacy of this tawdry society was a dangerous political lethargy that often accompanied self-indulgence and luxury.[107]

Industry had long laid claim to the philosophy that its accomplishments lay at the heart of American civilization. Some corporate leaders courted their employees with benevolent programs that included counseling, recreation, profit-sharing, and better working conditions. However, underlying this "welfare capitalism" was an agenda directed toward keeping company loyalty intact and unionism at bay. As the decade progressed, it appeared that this approach reflected a capitalism more responsive to employee concerns and thus more humane. Many did benefit; skilled craftsmen fared well. Semiskilled and unskilled workers had to contend with a labor surplus throughout

the 20s, and the softening demand explained why many working-class families benefited little if at all from the consumer revolution. In 1930 only 25 to 40 percent of American households owned the much vaunted labor saving devices—washing machines and vacuum cleaners—and only 50 percent owned a car.

Three Republican presidents presided over this era of "prosperity" and did so much in the same manner as the chief executives in the Gilded Age. Government in the 20s in reality was mediocre, corrupt, and bent on removing Progressive Era restraints that had been placed on business. When Warren G. Harding died in 1923 (of a heart attack undoubtedly hastened by revelations of rampant law-breaking by his closest associates to which he had been oblivious), the nation grieved. When the truth about his administration came out in the following two years, few Americans seemed to care. His successor, Calvin Coolidge, taciturn, distant, solitary, and formal, took his greatest pride in measures that deregulated the economy. Herbert Hoover wanted government to persuade private corporations to abandon their selfish ways and convert to cooperation and public service—what Ellis Hawley called "associationalism."[108]

By the end of the 20s the New York Stock Exchange had undergone a remarkable rise in prices; in less than two years the Dow Industrial Average had doubled. The market may have been deluged by money, but most buying was done "on margin," which meant only 10 percent of the price of the stock was put down for purchase. The remainder, borrowed from banks and brokers, most investors believed, would be paid when they sold their stocks later at much higher prices. Inevitably, fueled by greed, investment spiraled out of control until October 29, 1929, when confidence finally faltered and the market crashed. America had experienced other economic downturns (Thomas, as noted above,

remembered the Panic of 1893 vividly), but no one was prepared for a catastrophe of these proportions. Historians have debated the underlying causes, but they undoubtedly included mistakes by the Federal Reserve Board (curtailment of money in circulation and higher interest rates), the maldistribution of wealth, overproduction and underconsumption, and an ill-advised tariff act passed in 1930, co-authored by Utah's own Republican Senator Reed Smoot, that accelerated economic decline abroad as well as at home. Hawley-Smoot raised tariffs on seventy-five agricultural goods from 32 to 40 percent, the highest in American History, and also raised the rates by a similar percentage on 925 manufactured products. The Republican-controlled Congress had been convinced that such an increase would aid American industry. The disastrous effects, both at home and abroad, cannot be overstated. Ironically, the legislation increased the already significant economic hardship from which Utahns were already suffering. In a speech delivered to the Timpanogos Ladies' Night Club on May 31, 1931, Thomas noted that the past was all well and good, but one must look to the future: "faith cannot help but become shattered if life becomes a hopeless proposition [and] we cannot see the golden promise of opportunity." One of the functions of government, he felt, "should be to make this opportunity."[109]

For many, visual memory that arises from the Great Depression of the 1930s is almost stereotypical, filtered through a prism of black and white *Grapes of Wrath* images. The desperation forms an almost visible aura around the untold thousands who took to the road to flee a Horatio Alger tradition that had somehow gone horribly wrong. "There is a crime here," Steinbeck wrote, "that goes beyond denunciation." In August of 1932 a reporter from the *Saturday Evening Post* asked John Maynard Keynes, the brilliant

British economist, if there had ever been anything like the Great Depression. "Yes," he responded. "It was called the Dark Ages and it lasted four hundred years."[110] The analogy may have been extreme but valid, since in both cases people were victims of forces that defied their understanding. Americans in bread lines appeared "outraged and baffled;" it was "an article of faith that America, somehow, was different from the rest of the world." Economic devastation was unprecedented, but perhaps most damaging was the challenge that was being offered to the traditional republican ideal of self-sufficiency and the question of governmental and societal responsibility. Although some historians have attempted to minimize the effects of the ensuing Depression on Utah's economy, there can be no denying that the state was extremely hard hit. The following statistics are indicative of the magnitude of the calamity, but in the final analysis, for Elbert Thomas, all economic explanations by "experts," some legitimate, some not, distilled down into one thing: human suffering.

In 1930, 25 percent of Utah's 170,000 workers were engaged in agriculture-related employment, highly dependent on the depressed national market and prices, and there had been no significant recovery from the depression of 1920-1921 previously noted. Utah's economy was shifting; according to the 1930 census 50 percent of its population lived in urban areas and 39.2 percent of those were engaged in service-related occupations. Per capita income in 1929 was 559 dollars, 79.5 percent of the national average, having dropped from the 1900 figure of 90.1 percent. The following figures in Tables 2, 3, and 4 provide an abbreviated overview of Utah's makeup during the 1930s.

At the depths of the Depression, 61,500 Utahns—35.8 percent of the workforce—were unemployed. Gross farm income fell from 69 million dollars in 1929 to 29 million

Table 2. Utah vs. Nation

Urban population (21 urban places of 2,500 or more)	266,584
Total population	507,847
Birth rate per 1000	25.4%
National birth rate	21.3%
Death rate	9.9%
National death rate	11.3%
Marriage rate	11.1%
National marriage rate	9.2%
Divorce rate	2.0%
National divorce rate	1.6%
Percentage under age 10	35.6%
National percentage under age 10	19.6%
Percentage of males	51.2%
National percentage of males	50.6%
Percentage of foreign born	9.5%
National foreign born	11.5%

Table 3. Origins

Native born	378,778
Other states	78,713
Foreign born	48,015
Total population	507,847

Table 4. Ethnic Characteristics

White	500,124
Native American	2,869
Black	1,108
“Other” (usually Asian)	3,746
Total	507,847

in 1932. Mineral production dropped 81 percent; thirty-two of Utah's 105 banks failed, and by 1933 department stores reported a 41 percent decline in sales. By May of 1932, 206 people per thousand were on relief, a number only exceeded in South Dakota, Arizona, and Florida. By 1940, 48,000 were on direct, work, or SS relief.[112]

As has been noted, Elbert Thomas had grown up in a household where political issues and contemporary events were frequently topics of discussion. When he returned to the University of Utah in 1924 and devoted himself exclusively to teaching, what he had learned as a student of politics and government joined with his lifelong commitment to the ideals of the Democratic Party, acquired virtually from birth, to mature his own thinking into the formulation of a seasoned political ideology of his own. Despite the negative publicity that Utah had received in national political circles (which shall be dealt with shortly), he never felt that Utah was any "different from any other state. While men of prominent families have received high political rewards so have many others." Mentioning the disparate backgrounds of Senators such as Frank J. Cannon, Arthur L. Brown, Joseph L. Rawlins, Thomas Kearns, and George Sutherland, he pointed out that they had emerged from traditions of liberalism and conservatism alike. William H. King, he wrote, "is in many ways Utah's favorite son; the son of pioneer parents, a young man who was recognized almost in his youth and appointed to the Territorial Supreme Court." Reed Smoot, he said, had "family, church office, and a successful business career to recommend him," and Abe Murdock, although strongly identified with his Mormon background, had never used his family politically, valuable asset though it may have been. "I am sure that the people of the State have always honored the doers and have never paid much attention to family connections."[113]

By the time the Depression struck, his own political belief system had evolved to a point where he felt comfortable when dissatisfied citizens courted him for high office. "I have always believed that complete cooperation between the State of Utah and the Federal Government was the only way in which Utah could go forward as she should. I think that history bears out the fact that when our State has cooperated with the Federal Government our people have prospered; when they have been in conflict, they have not prospered." [114] "I had been mentioned for Governor quite often. It was sometime in August that the decision was made that my name should be presented to the Convention for the senatorship. But one radio talk was given in a formal way stating why my friends were going to present my name. This talk was given by John Henry Evans who was a classmate of mine, but much older than I was and who had been a teacher in the L.D.S. College long before I graduated. There was no publicity to speak of excepting that radio announcement and what the papers said. At the convention a few of my students passed out a circular descriptive of my work. This is all that was done."[115]

Thomas had been reluctant to enter the race as late as the week prior to the convention, when he consented to become an active candidate. Previously he had issued a statement in which he pointed out the national significance of the coming Utah senatorial race, terming the recall of Smoot as "Utah's greatest contribution to democracy." He foresaw a Democratic victory in November, but Smoot, he said would be rendered powerless as a member of the minority, and a Democratic Congress and Hoover would mean "four more years of controversy and no constructive action." He would not announce, he said, for two reasons. He did not wish to initiate his own candidacy, and he wanted to remain true to the idealism he had attempted to instill in his students. "If you're

wanted, go in; if you are not wanted, stay out. Ultimately, the self-seeker goes down. [Even if] success is practically certain [it] will not cause me to turn my back on my own teaching . . . but if Utah's democracy selects me as a candidate I most certainly will fight with all my strength."[116]

"Reed Smoot can be defeated," Thomas is reported to have said to the young men in one of his political science classes at the University of Utah. "His young men believed him. That 1932 summer the Democrats met to choose a senatorial candidate. A former student recalled his professor's remark. He rose to place in nomination the scholarly, unorthodox Thomas . . . The effect was electric. Elbert D. Thomas was named by acclamation."[117] Actually Thomas was nominated on the second ballot, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune.*

Still, it had not been as simple as that. It was clear that the Republican Party was up against it that year. Between 1929 and 1932 Hoover had, in Jonathan Alter's words, appeared "sullen and defensive as disease spread through the American economy." Justifiably or not, he was blamed for the misery in which the American people found themselves; by the time of the presidential campaign, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "notion of the country as a family with basic responsibility for its most vulnerable members became the animating spirit of the New Deal"—and people hopefully listened.[118]

Hoover himself was deceptively well-equipped; he had the reputation of a problem-solver, a master of detail, and a humanitarian who had fed the starving poor of Europe after World War I. He had organized aviation and broadcasting while Secretary of Commerce under Coolidge and overseen relief efforts when the Mississippi flooded in

1927. (He had also developed a habit of issuing self-congratulatory press releases that helped him win the 1928 Republican presidential nomination.) His intellect was formidable—Bernard Baruch said about him that "facts are as water to a sponge . . . absorbed into every tiny interstice."[119] But what he said was rendered so monotonously that Henry Stimson compared Cabinet meetings to sitting in a bath of ink. His rhetoric on confidence was endless, but he exuded none. The proliferation of apple sellers on city street corners, he said, was the result of shrewd marketing on the part of Oregon and Washington growers and that people had left their jobs to sell the fruit because of the high profits they could earn. His handlers attempted to humanize him but the results were disastrous. When enlisted to throw out the first baseball beginning the new season, he held it so long that the game started without him. He stashed it in his pocket. When he asked Rudy Vallee to pen a catchy campaign song, the entertainer came up with "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime." His Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, was even less inspirational: the Depression, he said, would "purge the rottenness out of the system." In the spirit of the Social Darwinism he espoused, he recommended "Liquidate labor, liquidate stock, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate." Hoover's prescription for recovery was balanced budgets, tax increases, and the gold standard, indicative of his rigidity and lack of imagination. On his deathbed he maintained that the economy would have bounded back under his leadership.[120]

Still the country suffered. In Utah industrial and agricultural workers were severely hard pressed, and a severe drought struck the state in 1931 and again in 1934. The state's high birthrate, then as now, made it imperative to feed and educate a disproportionate number of children which added to the already existing impoverishment.

William H. King's son David wrote a friend that his father felt Utah "was drying up . . . Why . . . in the land of plenty, with its huge mountains, rich in mineral resources, with its beautiful orchards, with its prairies, with its cattle and its trees, why should there be such want and destitution?"[121] Desperate for explanations and solutions, the people looked for the cause, and the most logical politico on whom to place the blame was the venerable Senator who had served the state for thirty years: Reed Smoot.

Reed Owen Smoot had been born in Salt Lake City in 1862, the son of a pioneer and former mayor of the city. A graduate of Brigham Young Academy (now Brigham Young University), he was a Mormon missionary in England, married on his return, and fathered seven children. In 1900 he was ordained an LDS apostle and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Receiving permission from then Mormon President Joseph Fielding Smith, he was sent to the United States Senate by the legislature on the Republican ticket in 1902, but his victory began a bitter four-year battle over his eligibility due to his church position, but the underlying reason was the lingering national suspicion regarding Mormons and polygamy. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that, despite the church's disavowal of the practice in the 1890 Manifesto, church leaders continued to bless polygamous unions. The exhaustive hearings resulted in his eventual seating in February of 1907. He was reelected in 1908 and continued to serve until 1932.

To many Republicans, Smoot was the Grand Old Man of the GOP. Active in the Republican high echelon, Chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, he was best remembered (and later resented) for his co-authorship of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Bill of 1930 (see above). The legislation arguably exacerbated the Great Depression and when hard times hit, Smoot was not allowed to forget it. In the spring of 1932 he

recorded misgivings in his diary. "I have been so crowded, so worried over financial conditions in all sections of this country . . . that I have had little sleep. Never was so worried." But despite repeated references to sleeplessness and fatigue through the ensuing months, by late summer he was feeling more optimistic after attending a White House reception on August 11, both for his own re-election and the President's. Eleven days later he noted that his office was crowded with callers wanting his help in procuring employment, but he could offer them "little hope."[122]

By the time of the Democratic State Convention in September of 1932, Utah Democrats, like many of their national counterparts, had fallen in behind Franklin Roosevelt's candidacy. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune* on September 3, 1932, a "Lively Fight Looms At State Convention," where the main issues would be nominating candidates for governor, deciding the Prohibition question, and nominating a Senatorial candidate from a field of four, with George Dern as a possible dark horse. The real platform fight, however, was between "wets" and "drys." On September 1 the *Tribune* had noted that the Women's Christian Temperance Union had attacked Roosevelt's stand on liquor, claiming that his repeal policy was a "surrender to the lower powers." [123] The following day the *Tribune* reported "Wets Defeat Drys in Fight on Platform," as Democrats "indorsed [sic] national platform, but want enforcement."[124] There was strong opposition to "saloon, speakeasy and kindred contrivances of Demon Rum."

The keynote address was delivered by Senator William S. King. Although prohibition (ridiculing the Republican liquor plan, he said it claimed to be "all things to all men," like a "hero who leaps on a horse and rides off in all directions") was mentioned, King spoke on almost wholly economic issues: silver rehabilitation, the

responsibility that Coolidge and Hoover bore for the Depression because of the by-now infamous Smoot-Hawley Tariff, and failed agricultural policies, all of which hearkened back to the Panic of 1873. Denying the much-vaunted Coolidge prosperity, he praised Roosevelt as a progressive thinker who would be president of the "whole people." Republicanism, he contended, was built on a sort of political mythology made up of frugality, the courtship of the debtor classes, and superior patriotism.[125]

Nominations followed. "Internationally known authority on history and political science" Elbert D. Thomas was nominated for Senator on the second ballot. His majorities were substantial and he seemed to strike a popular chord with the delegates. Henry Blood of Kaysville, Chairman of the State Highway Commission, was chosen as the gubernatorial candidate. But Thomas was the "sensation of the convention," as the *Tribune* labeled him, and made mention of the support he had accumulated from young people, particularly his students: "Youth spoke and was heard." Warwick Lamoreaux at one point took the floor and electrified the convention by stating that he had come as a Republican but would leave a Democrat because of Elbert Thomas. He knew, he said, many former students who would also cross party lines and that the state should pay attention to the 10,000 plus young men solidly behind the ticket. A tremendous demonstration followed during which "2 or 3" other "young men" seconded Lamoreaux in a similar vein. In the roll call that followed Thomas won by a landslide.[126]

The *Tribune* editorial the following day noted the Democratic party harmony, and that Thomas's nomination was a surprise, since he had generally been regarded as a passive candidate and surprised the supporters of the "more active and more seasoned" candidates. His entry, the writer commented, could be regarded as the enthusiastic

activism of the "younger element" in politics. The campaign was predicted to be a "clean, hard-fought contest," since both parties had fielded a high caliber of candidates who would conduct themselves accordingly by sticking to the issues and avoiding low-brow tactics.[127]

Elbert Thomas began his campaign with determination and energy, but also with very strong convictions regarding whether or not Smoot, with his religious responsibilities and connections, belonged in the Senate at all. Years later he would remember, "All my life I have opposed what Senator Smoot did because I was a Democrat and he was a Republican. I always thought it was a mistake for an apostle to sit in the United States Senate. I studied the whole of the proceedings in the Smoot investigation, and while that investigation was unjust and to a certain extent dishonest against our people, the wisdom of allowing it to happen is still questionable. The ill that was done to our own people will never be overcome. Therefore, you see there was nothing accidental in my preparation. I do not talk about this . . . because people misunderstand me when I say it, but when Senator Smoot was elevated to the apostleship, he announced to the people that he was through with politics." Thomas believed that Smoot was compromising his religious ethic, since any political honor was beneath that which had been bestowed upon him by his church and his God. ". . . as I saw it, Senator Smoot was stepping down."[128] That being said, there is no evidence that the religious issue was ever broached by Thomas, who stuck strictly to the issues (he did not once mention Smoot by name) and in his mind, they were many and clear-cut. The old questions that had dominated the previous two national elections—the Klan in 1924, Al Smith's Catholicism in 1928—seemed irrelevant, even trivial, in the face of the

economic cataclysm facing the electorate of 1932. The contest would focus first and foremost on the economy, which Roosevelt blamed on Hoover's protectionist policies; the Democrats also targeted the failure of Prohibition, which few Republicans were prepared to defend.

Thomas drew from his educational and intellectual background in his speeches. In an address delivered to the League for Independent Political Action at the Newhouse Hotel on September 12, he stated that parties had evolved not because of division but sentiment; the result, he said, was conflicting interest within the party and a tendency on the part of candidates to confuse the issues in order to win votes. Hoover and running mate Charles Curtis had proven this by their disparities regarding the Republican platform. His own personal credo was that he would never make idle, unrealistic promises on which it would be impossible for him to deliver. He defined a liberal as one who looked into the past, drew on it to improve the present, and used it to visualize a better world for the future. Conservatives, on the other hand, he believed, clung to the status quo out of fear and suspicion of change. He credited third party movements with the vision to conceptualize the future despite their powerlessness to popularize that vision.[129]

The following evening Thomas appeared with Senator William King before the Junior Democratic League of Utah in Park City, where they spoke on the use of silver as a palliative. Silver men in Utah, they said, were self-deceptive, and Hoover's promise for an international silver congress was compared to McKinley's 1897 policy that had provided no rehabilitation but rather sent European nations stampeding toward the gold standard. Hoover's treatment of the Bonus Marchers was also derided. [130]Monetary

policy was again the topic the following day when Thomas, again with King, spoke in the Morgan Opera House, repeated that silver was the paramount issue for Utah and pledged to work for a broadened approach toward the tax revenues. World debt, they pointed out, was 400 billion dollars, while the gold supply accounted for only 16 billion dollars. Simply stated, and economists agreed, they maintained, was the need for an increase in basic money that would solve problems across the financial spectrum.[131] On September 16, Thomas spoke to Ephraim Democrats, condemning the gold standard and tariff policies, but also stood squarely behind the platform advocacy of the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. Recommending a written provision that would bar interstate liquor traffic and provide for federal enforcement, he nonetheless admonished the audience that an inordinate amount of quibbling over the liquor question paled in significance to the unequal distribution of wealth that was translating into a personalized human suffering caused by homes lost and children ill fed and clothed.[132]

Local politics, however, were eclipsed with the arrival of Franklin D. Roosevelt in Salt Lake City. The Union Pacific Station and the Newhouse Hotel were packed with an enthusiastic citizenry. Arriving at midnight in an eight-car train (including his "Pioneer" private car and a research library), he was accompanied by his son James and his wife, daughter Anna, Joseph P. Kennedy, Breckinridge Long, Raymond Moley, and forty correspondents and reporters.[133] An editorial in that same issue ("Utah Welcomes Roosevelt") referred to him as an "illustrious citizen and American leader," noting that in reality it was a bipartisan welcome. (A *Tribune* advertisement on September 16 read "Hear Governor Roosevelt in Your Own Home with One of These Super Radio Bargains." Auerbach's offered Philcos for $35.50 or $3.50 per month—and Atwater

Kents for $89.50 or $8.00 per month.) He was "honored, respected, and admired for his works and ambitions"—thus the reception was not a political rally but a state reception in appreciation of what many believed to be an indication of his interest in Western issues such as the rehabilitation of mining and agriculture. Regardless of the outcome of the election, the *Tribune* continued, "Utah is honored" and hoped for a "long and lasting friendship in this state."

His address in the Tabernacle on September 18 was introduced by Elbert Thomas. Utah had been founded, he said, on the basis of a practical political philosophy: "Teach the people proper principles and they will govern themselves." Traditionally the people of Utah had placed great emphasis on the "training of youth;" consequently the people had been from the beginning progressive thinkers who understood that growth was possible only through change. "We, sons of the pioneers, still strive for that change which will bring a better world." Acknowledging the part that youthful activism had played in his nomination, he noted that it was not necessarily the "young in years" but those who looked forward. This tide, he told Roosevelt, was responsible for the "tribute to you and your assurance of hope. We have faith in you and we recognize you in every deed, as an embodiment of hope and a will for change which make you, in the words of the prophet of old, the 'Desire of the Nation.'"[134]

However, in spite of the warmth of his welcome, his words proved to be disappointing. He cautiously referred to the silver issue, leaving the issue in the hands of the Congressional candidates, and failed to address Western problems—i.e., the tariff, water conservation, public lands, highways—leading the *Tribune* editorial writer to wonder what the "fate [of the West] might be under a change of national

administration."[135] In a related article the newspaper reported that he had outlined a six point program to aid industry in an unemotional statement of policy; the editorial staff pointed out that railroads were "not a Utah topic."[136]

Despite Thomas's energetic and fast-paced campaign schedule, by the end of September, Reed Smoot did not seem outwardly worried. Seventy years old now (Thomas was forty-nine), he was called the "dean of the Senate and apostle of high tariffs" by *Washington News* reporter Walker Stone. Returning to Utah on the 27th of September, he had said prior to his departure from Washington that he had no doubt but that he and Hoover would carry Utah in November. He ridiculed reports of a Utah "rebellion" into Democratic ranks and felt sure that the state would remain "safely Republican." Talk of support for Elbert Thomas, he said, was little more than rumor being generated by the Young Democrats Club at the University. Thomas may have criticized his tariff policy but had failed to point out harmful duties on any specifically Utah products; "the existence of Utah is dependent on protective tariffs." Optimistic bravado aside, however, Stone pointed out that political analysts were predicting a "battle for [Smoot's] political life."

The anxiety he was experiencing was evidence that he knew it. The Mormon Church could not be counted on as an ally, since Thomas's religious credentials were not insignificant. Smoot was also a lifelong prohibitionist who continued to call himself a "dry" while advocating a modification of the Eighteenth Amendment. Thomas, although having endorsed the Democrats' "wet" plank, said little about the issue.[137] Thomas's campaign literature emphasized his qualifications and stayed on the high ground. The cover of one pamphlet stated that "He represents . . . The forward looking, tolerant,

common sense, intelligent citizenship of today and tomorrow;" on the back in bold letters were the words "THOMAS can beat SMOOT." The text covered his birth and parentage, business experience, education, military career, literary and religious achievements, and social connections. Details included his mission to Japan, his management of his father's business, fiscal duties at the University of Utah, his doctoral studies, his chairmanship of the Committee on Military Affairs at the University, his authorship of magazine articles and books ("on the bookshelves of six nations"), the scholarly importance of *Chinese Political Thought* and its impact on political theory, his activities for his church, his connections and popularity with Catholics and Jews, and his memberships in prestigious professional societies.

In a summary of his qualifications in other campaign literature, his strengths were listed as his "great, general common sense," his knowledge of the Orient, his quarter century of study of government, his "liberal and forward-looking attitude," a tolerant and fair spirit, his "loveable" personality, his genuine interest and care for his fellow man, his vision and poise, and his "capacity for efficient, dispassionate, thoughtful action."[138] It was also noted that he had been listed by the *Salt Lake Telegram* as one of the "ten greatest living Utahns." The presentation concluded with the following: "A Suggestion: Can you think of any other Democrat in Utah who measures up to this description of Dr. Thomas? Is there any one [sic] else in the party who could draw so many votes in an election? Can you name any man who is more popular with all classes of our citizens?"

Featured on the cover of the *Salt Lake Times: Salt Lake Mining and Legal News* on October 1, 1932, he was said to be "Backed by a united party, aided by thousands of anti-Smoot Republicans, and qualified by training, experience and temperament for the

high office of United States senator, Dr. Elbert D. Thomas is being picked as the winner in the senatorial election." Going into the final month of the campaign, he continued his frenetic schedule. Addressing the Ex-Servicemen's Roosevelt Club and the Hotel Newhouse on October 6, he asked those in attendance to decide his fitness on the basis of his liberal record and fair dealing. If government can constitutionally draft at cost of life and limb, he stated, it owes a debt to its veterans. Highly critical of Hoover's approach to the Bonus Expeditionary Force, he branded his methods as a "unique example of military procedure in this country." The United States had gone "on record" condemning gas as inhumane, but had used it on its own citizens at Anacostia. As for Hoover's contention that the majority of the BEF were "ex-convicts," Thomas responded that if they were, they had done their time and had a "clean slate." (According to Veterans' Administration figures, 94 percent of the Bonus Marchers had Army or Navy records, 67 percent had served overseas, and 20 percent had been disabled. The episode of the Bonus March will be dealt with in detail at the beginning of Chapter 4.) He labeled this rationale behind their treatment as inexcusable, and compared Hoover's rigid adherence to the gold standard to one "rushing into a building" to save the valueless while allowing people to starve. At the same meeting the head of the Utah Federation of Labor condemned Smoot's policies toward working people and urged voting a straight Democratic ticket.[139]

The following day Thomas, who was averaging between six and eight speeches a day, addressed the Ogden and Salt Lake Junior Democratic Leagues, 3,000 "youth" who represented the spirit of the Democratic Party. Again, silver was the topic, deserving a "proper place in the world," Thomas said, since it would benefit millions with food, clothing, and prosperity. He repudiated Hoover's Des Moines speech, which he called a

hysterical devotion to the gold standard. Silver was simply common sense. He also voiced his anger at Republican statesmen who called the "youth movement" meaningless.[140] Three days late the *Tribune* published the results of a poll in District 1359: 577 cast votes for Smoot, 778 for Thomas; Roosevelt defeated Hoover in a vote of 802 to 550.

Heartening statistics aside, Elbert Thomas was not naïve enough to underestimate the power that Smoot wielded both locally and nationally. He believed Utah had shed its antiquated Mormon versus anti-Mormon habits in the voting booth by 1932, but seems to contradict himself in the following statement regarding the power of the church in politics. "Most of the Smoots became Democrats," he wrote Jonas. "Reed Smoot was an exception. I do not think that until the Democratic Party in its 1904 national platform made its declaration about the Mormon people or until the Smoot case became a national issue that any Mormon took sides in a political party because of church affiliation . . . I don't think that the church issue in Utah is unique in politics. If you can explain why the Irish people generally became Democratic and the German people generally Republican in the national, probably you would have some explanation for Utah. Senator Smoot was an apostle and Senator for thirty years. You couldn't expect any politician not to take advantage of such a situation, although as a politician I did not." [141]

Reputation, seniority, and national recognition were formidable attributes on which Smoot could rely, no doubt, but there was also considerable dissatisfaction with him for a variety of reasons. Utah had been a Republican stronghold for a significant amount of time, and with Vermont the only state whose electoral vote went to Taft in 1912. He had undeniably made a favorable impression with his work ethic, and the

controversy that had surrounded his original election had long since died out. One of the most respected members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle he had retained his conservative principles and had never dallied with Western radicalism. Not Thomas's intellectual equal, he had compensated with diligence and tenacity and played a leading role in revenue and tariff legislation. The state Republican organization that backed Smoot was powerful and well-organized, but his supporters were never unaware of the unsettling likelihood that his victory was dependent on Hoover's.[142]

Roosevelt, as noted above, had made Salt Lake City the site of one of the few major speeches of his national tour and had stayed two days as the house guest of Governor George Dern. When Herbert Hoover arrived in Utah it was little more than a stopover on his way to Palo Alto to vote, but he was the last and most important of the political leaders to do so. A student at the University of Utah that year, biographer Fawn Brodie, a self-described "conventional young Republican" who survived the cruelest years on produce from her father's Huntsville farm, recalls hours of waiting outside the Hotel Utah to see Hoover's arrival. "I shall never forget my own shock when I finally stared down at him pushing through the crowd. This was not a proud president of the United States but a little man with blotched skin and the desperate look of failure."[143] Vice President Charles Curtis, Secretaries Hyde, Mills, and Wilbur, former Governor Morrow of Kentucky, and other lesser luminaries had traveled to Utah and made strenuous efforts on Smoot's behalf.

Smoot himself campaigned as he never had before—and his credentials were impressive: Chairman of the Public Lands Committee, Chairman of the Finance Committee, ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, Chairman of the

Committee on Printing, Chairman of the Public Buildings Commission of the District of Columbia, and member of the United States Debt Funding Commission.[144] Tall, slender, and a vigorous though perhaps not an eloquent speaker, he appeared in "every nook and corner" of the state, but he was hard-pressed to answer for "30 cent wheat, $3 steers, and 8-cent wool. The silence of mine and mill were more eloquent than the Senator's discourse on the foreign causes of a world-wide depression."[145] A letter he received shortly before the election could not have been anything but heartening for him. Over the signatures of 57 supporters, the "Elect Smoot Club of Pleasant Grove" described him as honest and hard-working and the "greatest missionary the Mormon people have out in the world." Wholeheartedly behind the tariff and against getting "down on a level with cheap foreigners," the authors blasted the Democratic claim that Smoot "stands for the rich," claiming that it exacerbated "class prejudice." Do you want change? they asked. YOU DO NOT. Hoover's policies were "sound" and the present economic upheaval only needed time to right itself.[146]

Smoot had also claimed that Japanese rugs were selling in the American market at nine cents each after paying a 75 percent duty. Thomas responded by saying "He avers that the materials alone would cost 28 cents in America. He thinks we pay American dollars for these rugs—a mediaeval [sic] error refuted by every economist." Shredding Smoot's tortured comparisons of products and the relative monetary strengths and weaknesses of the yen and the dollar, Thomas stated "Real progressives would trade with Japan; reactionary Republicans would stop, and have stopped, most of this trade." (In a somewhat oddly related small article in the *Tribune* on October 1, mention was made of one Juijji J. Kasai, a Japanese official who had conducted a brief Buddhist ceremony as

tribute at the grave of Brigham Young. In an interview he had said that rumors of an alliance with Russia were "humbug," that Japan had not violated the Kellogg-Briand Pact, that Manchuoko was not a "puppet" but that the invasion of Manchuria had been a defensive act and was comparable to the Monroe Doctrine.) Thomas then took on Vice President Curtis and his contention that agricultural imports had been cut by nearly half a billion dollars by the tariff act and is therefore protecting American farmers. However, Thomas pointed out, "He forgot to mention that our agricultural exports were cut by a still greater figure. The imports he speaks of were mostly tropical products of which we raise little."[147]

Yet, nothing worked against the *Zeitgeist*. In the end the Roosevelt margin of victory was 31,975 votes. The total vote in the state reached record proportions, 25,000 more ballots being cast than in the 1928 election. "The highest point of voting in the recent election is shown upon the United States senatorship, where 206,079 [votes were cast and] where Thomas's plurality over Smoot was 30, 843 votes. Nationally the Roosevelt victory had collapsed the Fourth Party System and created the Fifth with the "New Deal coalition." Of the electoral vote Roosevelt received 472 to Hoover's 59, carried 42 states as compared to 6, and won 57.4 percent of the popular vote. [148]

"I am merely a beneficiary of the Roosevelt landslide," Thomas told reporters. "This was not an election; it was a recall of Herbert Hoover and Reed Smoot. It was a protest vote. I thank the hundreds of students who put trust in their old teacher."[149] But there were other forces behind the scenes, and he gave credit to them in an *Arizona Republic* interview. Dr. H. L. Marshall was head of the student welfare department and university physician at the U, and Morris Rosenblatt was manager of the Eastern and

Western Steel and Iron Works—both claimed to be "amateurs in politics." (Thomas had been on the Board of Directors of the Intermountain Building and Loan Association in Salt Lake City since 1925. He was elected chairman shortly after his win over Smoot. Marshall and Rosenblatt were also members of the directorate.) *The New Republic* noted that many had thought Smoot unbeatable. "The rich and the strong copper interests threatened their employees with closed-down plants if Hoover and Smoot were not returned to office . . . In spite of it all, the voters of Utah, like those in so many other states, stood up and told the bosses, political and economic, to go chase themselves . . . The world do move—at least, a little."[150] Clearly the electorate wanted substantive change. For how long and to what degree remained to be seen; one Smoot supporter wrote from Provo on Nov. 13, "Perhaps in 2 years or 4 [sic] they will want another change."[151]

"All political careers are accidents, yet all can be rationalized," Thomas wrote to Jonas. "The emotional whip of a landslide wipes out, at times, even the most strikingly individually successful men in public life. In my particular case in 1932 the political trend was our way . . . All of that we can call accidental. The fact that I did not carry a single county that I did not get into and that I carried every county but one that I was able to campaign in seems to prove that the election was not accidental . . . I was about as familiar with Senator Smoot's thirty-year record from my studies as anyone the Democrats could nominate, and had the campaign been a Thomas-Smoot debate, I would have won it. That was not accidental. I was always belittled, but I knew everything that he had done, but I did not campaign against Senator Smoot because I did not want to make it a personal affair. I campaigned for the promised Democratic program." The

counties he did not carry were rural and sparsely populated: Daggett, Garfield, Iron, Kane, Millard, and Sanpete.[152]

Elbert Thomas had grown up in an advantaged household. He well understood that his fortuitous origins had provided him with experiences and opportunities that the majority of Americans would never realize. During the campaign he had been impatient with what he saw as trivial quarreling over issues such as prohibition and the wayward lifestyles of "flaming youth." What he had seen and been touched by was the misery of hungry and shabbily dressed children, the bewilderment of their frantic parents faced with lost incomes, lost homes, lost hope. After the election the weekly liberal newsmagazine *The Utah Statesman* changed its name to *The New Deal.* The first Utahn of note to appear on its cover was Senator Elbert Thomas.

Endnotes

[95] Thomas to Frank Jonas, Sept. 23, 1948, Thomas MSS 129, Box 1.
[96] Ralph Hann, "Thomas and Tomorrow," *Reader's Scope*, no, date, Thomas MSS 129, Box 1.
[97] Allan Kent Powell, ed., *Utah History Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Education Network, 2011).
[98] *David Leip's Atlas of U. S. Presidential Elections,* http: uselectionsatlas.org, July 28, 2005. The 20s were not entirely politically barren for the Democrats. Senator William H. King was relected in 1922 and 1928, and internal divisions in the Utah GOP would contribute to a major upset in 1924 when Democratic legislator George Dern defeated incumbent Republican Governor Charles Mabey. One campaign slogan ran "We want a Dern good governor and we don't mean Mabey."
[99] Dean L. May, *Utah: A People's History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 170-187.
[100] Powell, *Utah History Encyclopedia*, 75, 101-102.
[101] Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," 26.
[102] Ibid., 26-27.
[103] Hann, "Thomas and Tomorrow," no page, date.
[104] British *Who's Who,* 1928, no page, Thomas MSS 129, Box 1.
[105] Zabriskie, "A Chronological History," Chapter 1920-1929, 50.
[106] Ibid., Chapter 1910-1919, 33.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Mark Allen Eisner, *From Warfare State to Welfare State: World War I, Compensatory State Building, and the Limits of the Modern Order* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State Press, 2000), 113.
[109] Thomas MSS 129, Box 5.
[110] Zabriskie, "A Chronological History," Chapter 1930-1939, 2.
[111] Ibid., 1-10.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Thomas to Frank Jonas, Sept. 23, 1943, 3, MSS 129, Box 1.
[114] Ibid., 1.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Thomas MSS 129, Box 299, Scrapbook 1, 129.
[117] Hann,"Thomas and Tomorrow," no p.
[118] Rexford G. Tugwell, *In Search of Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 94.
[119] Jonathan Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 2-3.
[120] Ibid., 82.
[121] May, *Utah: A People's History,* 176.
[122] Reed Smoot Papers, MSS 1187, Diaries, Vol. 12, Box 107.
[123] "WCTU Attacks Roosevelt Stand on Liquor Issue, *Salt Lake Tribune*, Sept. 1, 1932, 5.
[124] "Wets Defeat Drys in Fight on Platform," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 2, 1932, 3.
[125] "King Derides Republicans' Liquor Plank, Assails Coolidge, Hoover Policies in Democratic Keynote Talk,"*Salt Lake Tribune*, Sept 4, 1932, 1, 4.

[126] "Democrats Nominate State Ticket: Thomas Nominated in Senatorial Race With Blood for Governor," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 4, 1932, 1.
[127] "Democratic Convention," *Salt Lake Tribune*, Sept. 5, 1932, 6.
[128] Thomas to Frank Jonas, Sept. 22, 1943, 6-7.
[129] "Dr. Thomas Raps Trend of Parties, *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 13, 1932, 14.
[130] "Thomas, King Demand Action to Aid Silver," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 14, 1932, 10.
[131] "Thomas Flays Gold Standard," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 15, 1932, 6.
[132] "Leaders of Utah Democrats Talk at Ephraim Meet," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 17, 1932, 10.
[133] "Roosevelt Arrives in Salt Lake City: Brings Democracy's Message," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 17, 1932, 4.
[134] Address, Salt Lake Tabernacle, Sept. 18, 1932, Thomas MSS 129, Box 5.
[135] "Utah Welcomes Roosevelt," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 18, 1932, 1.
[136] "Roosevelt Urges Rail Revision," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Sept. 18, 1932, 1.
[137] Walker Stone, "Sen. Smoot Home Confident of Republican Victory," *Washington News,* Sept. 27, 1932, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, no p.
[138] Campaign brochure, 1932, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, no p.
[139] "Thomas Turns Off Query on Bonus Stand," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Oct. 6, 1932, 11 .
[140] "Rallies Held by Smoot, Thomas in Battle for Toga," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Oct. 7, 1932, 20.
[141] Thomas to Frank Jonas, Sept. 22, 1943, 3.
[142] Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 1.
[143] Zabriskie, "A Chronological History," Chapter 1930-1939, 4.
[144] Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 1, 77.
[145] N. L. Wilson, Editorial Correspondent, *New York Times,* Nov. 17, 1932, no p.
[146] Smoot MSS 1187, Box 54.
[147] Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 1.
[148] Kristi Anderson, *The Creation of A Democratic Majority 1928-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 160.
[149] Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 1, 71.
[150] Thomas MSS 129, Box 129, Scrapbook 1, 58.
[151] Smoot MSS 1187, Box 54.
[152] Letter to Jonas, Sept. 22, 1943, 6.

CHAPTER 4

THE INVESTIGATION OF THINGS

In the September 2, 1932, issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune* a short article appeared: "Warning Given on Bonus Talks." The topic was a gag order issued by the civil service commission to federal employees and their families which prohibited them from speaking on "taboo political questions." One Ben H. Kerr of Gary, Indiana, had been fired, ostensibly for "repeated delinquencies," but he had also introduced a bonus resolution at the meeting of his local American Legion chapter on March 6, contrary to the President's wishes.[153] Of all the tragic episodes of the Great Depression, none is more emblematic than the fate of the ragged, ill-fed veterans of the Bonus Army—and none is more illustrative of the desperation visited upon ordinary people and how disparately it was interpreted by Herbert Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Providing veterans with compensation for the earning potential they had lost while serving in the military was not new. In 1781 most of the Continental Army had been cashiered without pay; two years later many were angered enough to surround the Congress at the then-capital of Philadelphia. The legislators had fled to New York, but were sufficiently shaken by the episode to restrict such future unrest by passing the Posse Comitatus Act, which provided that the military could be used for domestic police activity in the by-then capital at Washington, D. C. The tradition of military bonuses was broken in 1898 during the Spanish American War. Discharged veterans were given sixty

dollars following World War I, but political activism on the part of the American Legion beginning in 1919 resulted in passage of the War Adjusted Compensation Act of 1924, which promised an increased payment plus compound interest redeemable in 1945. Calvin Coolidge refused to sign and commented that "patriotism . . . bought and paid for is not patriotism." Veterans were allowed to borrow against the postdated check, which by 1931 was up to 50 percent of the face value.

By 1932—what William Manchester called "the cruelest year"—approximately 25,000 of them, with their wives and children, had converged on Washington led by former Army sergeant Walter W. Waters to petition the government for relief. The maximum bonus amount was $625, equivalent to $7,899 in 2010. Reporters had christened them the "Bonus Army." They set up a ramshackle "Hooverville" (complete with crude sanitation facilities) across the Anacostia River in southeast Washington, where they drilled, sang songs, and waited for their President. Drew Pearson, thirty-four years old at the time, described them as knowing only that they were out of work, their families starving, and they wanted to be paid. Will Rogers said they were the "best behaved" of any "hungry men assembled anywhere in the world."[154]

Still Hoover did not come. Shutting himself in the White House, he received a heavy-weight wrestling champion, representatives of Eta Upsilon Gamma sorority, and winners of a high school essay-writing contest, but would not trouble himself with the Bonus Marchers. "To the administration they were an eyesore and a humiliation, and its determination to exorcise them reflected a general hardening throughout the land of the attitude of the well-fed toward the ill-fed."[155] In the end they were driven off by the United States Army: 500 infantry, 500 cavalry, 6 Renault FT tanks, led by Chief of Staff

Douglas MacArthur, and 800 Washington police. Four were dead, 1017 injured. Franklin Roosevelt, at home in Hyde Park, alternated between anger and anguish. “They’re probably camping on the roads leading out of Washington,” he told Rexford Tugwell. “They must be in terrible shape.” [156]

Therein lay the difference: the occupant of the White House saw this as an embarrassing and annoying public relations problem. The Governor of New York, who aspired to the White House, saw it as a human calamity. Over two thousand miles away in Utah the Democratic candidate for the United States Senate agreed. “Men, women, and children are my first consideration. Their welfare should be the Government’s first consideration. The Federal Government can do more for the people than can the individual states; therefore, I am for the development of Federal powers in cooperation with the states.”[157] In his thinking the need to relieve the most rudimentary human misery was nothing less than a moral imperative. During his campaign in 1932 he stated precisely that and touched a nerve in the frustrated, frightened Utah electorate. Over the next eighteen years Elbert Thomas would act in the name of those men, women, and children, bolstered by his conviction that Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal programs provided the best available solutions to lift the nation out of its despair. But in retrospect something deeper and more profound than a routine changing of the guard had happened in 1932. A metaphorical gear had shifted in the political universe that would forever alter public perception of government and make that election year nothing less than a contest between traditionalism and modernity. The outcome would determine for the future what federal policy was morally obligated to accomplish on behalf of the electorate.

Economists and businessmen generally agreed that depressions were part of a fiscal cycle, a sort of "wringer" (in the spirit of Andrew Mellon, mentioned above) that would pass; people simply needed to "make do, wear out," tighten their belts, and wait for the chain of events to right itself and bring about recovery. The most optimistic observers predicted this to happen as early as 1933.[158] It was easy for analysts to glibly predict better times ahead, not so easy for the average household caught in a gethsemane not of their own making. But they wondered. In *The Grapes of Wrath* John Steinbeck gave voice to the bewilderment. "Maybe, they thought, maybe we sinned in some way we didn't know about."

President John Edgerton of the National Association of Manufacturers stated that "Many of those who are most boisterous now in clamor for work have either struck on the jobs they had or don't want to work at all, and are utilizing the occasion to swell the communistic chorus." [159] When questioned about the inability of a worker to survive on one or two days of wages per week, he responded, "Why, I've never thought of paying men on the basis of what they need. I pay for efficiency. . . I attend to . . . social welfare stuff in my church work."[160]

"If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself," John Steinbeck wrote in *The Grapes of Wrath.* "If you could separate causes from results, if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, Lenin were results, not causes, you might survive. But that you cannot know. For the quality of owning freezes the 'I' and cuts you off forever from the 'we.'" And the statistics of deprivation were astounding. In Philadelphia little girls invented a doll game called "Eviction," but the expulsion from one's home set off a vicious cycle of empty rentals, unpaid taxes,

reduced services, and crumbling urban infrastructures where municipal governments could no longer afford to remove snow or repair deteriorating public roads and buildings. In Chicago public relief nosedived (it had been in the red since 1930), resulting in more evictions; 600,000 were unemployed. Sally Rand, on the other hand, was earning $6,000 a week at the city-supported Chicago World's Fair in 1933 for performing her nude fan dance.

Weekly relief payments for a family of four varied from $5.50 in Philadelphia to $.60 in Detroit. After 1932 the acceptance of public aid carried a dreadful psychological stigma. Those receiving welfare were disenfranchised in ten states, and the possibilities of barring children from school and families from church on that basis were entertained. Public servants, especially teachers, were particularly hard hit; by 1932 in Chicago they had received paychecks in only five of thirteen months.[161]

Malnutrition statistics ranged between 20 and 90 percent and symptoms included "drowsiness, lethargy, and sleepiness."[162] Nonsense, a writer at *Literary Digest* chirped. "People are becoming more courteous . . . thoughtless women especially . . . [are becoming] tame and cautious. . . . Prosperity ruins the moral fiber of the people." But the 99 percent of the population who owned only 41 percent of the wealth (65 percent of the 59 owned by the top 1 percent was in the hands of 600 corporations) were neither mollified nor convinced of the value of their altruistic self-improvement. Taking advantage of legal loopholes in the tax code, J. P. Morgan paid zero percent in taxes between 1929 and 1932. *Time* called crooked financiers "banksters."

"Nobody is actually starving," the President insisted. ". . . Hoboes are better fed than they have ever been." *Fortune* magazine called Hoover a liar. Nevertheless, he

gamely continued to insist that any kind of public dole would destroy the self-sufficiency that lay at the heart of the American character. Putting on his high-button shoes and celluloid collar (looking stylistically very much like Reed Smoot), he went out among the people. The Treasury agents assigned to guard him feared for his life. In St. Paul, referring to the Bonus Marchers, he said "Thank God we still have a government in Washington that still knows how to deal with a mob." In city after city he made blunder after blunder, accusing Roosevelt of "calumnies . . . defamation . . . untruths . . . ignorance . . . misstatements . . ." He was hissed. When he promised that no deserving citizen would starve, they jeered. Detroit was worst; with 250,000 people on relief, throngs of the angry and violent lined his limousine route. Mounted police with nightsticks scattered them, but finally the President was moved to understand that although he could not reverse the hatred the people bore for him, he might be able to win by inciting fear of what a "Roosevelt revolution" might do.[163]

If FDR somehow lost the confidence of business, Hoover felt, some sort of mystical demographic legerdemain would transform his grassroots opposition into support. The conventional wisdom deemed business the culprit almost unanimously; no less a market tycoon than Joseph Kennedy stated that "The belief that those in control of the corporate life of America were motivated by honesty and ideals of honorable conduct" had been "completely shattered." In retrospect, Hoover never really had a chance—because he never really understood the magnitude of the calamity and its effects on those it had hit the hardest. He did not advocate an entirely hands-off policy, but when he did use the instruments of government at his disposal it spelled increased political disaster, particularly in terms of the public relations image with which he so concerned

himself. The capstone on a program of public works, ostensibly to provide employment, was the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, designed to prop up the sagging financial structure and provide relief funds to the states. Authorized to provide 300 million dollars nationwide for unemployment, only 10 percent of that amount had reached the states by the end of the year. Thirty-three percent of the amount was coopted as a loan to his Central Bank and Trust in Chicago by Charles Dawes, whom Hoover had chosen to preside over the program. Millions referred to the program as a "breadline for big business."[164]

As he crossed the country and pressed the flesh, Franklin Roosevelt told a friend, "I have looked into the faces of thousands of Americans . . . They have the frightened look of lost children." Two candidates could not have been more different in outlook and temperament. The beginning had been inauspicious. With only a few exceptions there was no great outpouring of confidence or affection for Roosevelt when he was placed at the head of the Democratic ticket in Chicago that summer of 1932. He had been weighed and found wanting by a variety of political analysts and observers, labeled "another Hoover," "not a man of great intellectual force or supreme moral stamina," "weak," and "ready to compromise." Walter Lippmann said he possessed "not a very good mind," that he was incapable of comprehending problems with large dimensions, "a kind of amiable Boy Scout" who was too concerned with political advantage." Herbert Bayard Swope, Arthur Krock, and Frank Kent concurred.[165]

His nomination had been hard fought, brokered by machine bosses. The party's platform, given the seriousness of the emergency, was appallingly lacking in innovation—or hope. Federal spending was cut 25 percent, the budget was to be

balanced, and the gold standard and *laissez faire* remained sacrosanct. Its only saving grace was the plank advocating the repeal of prohibition. At a time when Americans really needed a drink, they could not legally get one within their own borders and had not been able to since the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in January of 1919. Those who had supported the ban on liquor, many of them prominent and wealthy figures including John D. Rockefeller and the DuPont brothers, had changed their minds. Clearly the cure had been worse than the disease: "temperant drinking" had declined, organized crime had experienced explosive growth, more children were actually abused and neglected than before Prohibition, and parents feared their children were acquiring a disdain for the law. Yet maintaining a "dry" society through legal means still had many supporters. Ultimately the Republicans continued (albeit half-heartedly) to defend it, which induced many prorepeal groups and individuals to support the Democrats. Perhaps most disheartening to advocates of action and change, Roosevelt offered no clear-cut agenda of his own, his battle plan unfocused at best, nonexistent at worst. But as his opponent continued to beat the by-now worn out drum of the danger of desertion of American principles and tradition in the name of innovation, the Roosevelt magic began to emerge in the form of his inner strength and confidence. More importantly, as the months passed, it became clear, in William Manchester's words, that he was the "only politician in the country who thought of economics as a *moral* problem. He cared about people. [Voters] could feel that."[166]

Although he remained cautious, even bromidic, and he continued to adhere to economic orthodoxies, he had drawn a line in the sand by putting big business on notice: a "few powerful interests" were not going to make "industrial cannon fodder of the lives

of half the population of the United States."[167] Lippmann, among others, had underestimated his political talents, his common sense, but most significantly his compassion. And it was this empathy for the challenges and suffering of others, tempered in the crucible of his own adversity, that drew young, forward-looking, morally centered politicians like Elbert Thomas to him. On election night both presidential candidates delivered radio addresses to the nation. Again, an obviously exhausted and broken Hoover appealed to the people to keep faith with American tradition and to turn away from "false gods arrayed in the rainbow colors of promises," but his voice was hollow and disillusioned. The contrast with Roosevelt could not have been more striking: "You may not have universally agreed with me, but you have universally been kind to me," Roosevelt said. "Out of this unity that I have seen we may build the strongest strand to lift ourselves out of the Depression." He waited for returns at the Biltmore until Hoover conceded at 12:17 A.M. He had won the greatest victory since Lincoln defeated McClellan (212 to 12 electoral votes). Retiring home to his town house, he voiced his fear to his son Jimmy as he was helped into bed. "I'm just afraid that I may not have the strength to do this job."[168] No president, Lincoln excluded, had faced a crisis more formidable.

Most likely again in the name of an intuitive belief that change was an absolute necessity for getting through the days ahead, the electorate gave Roosevelt a cooperative legislature. Table 5, Congressional Elections, November 3, 1932, provides an overview of the results.

Thomas had received the highest number of votes in the 1932 Utah election, besting Roosevelt by 139 ballots. He had defeated Reed Smoot with a plurality of

Table 5. Congressional Elections, November 3, 1932[169]

Party	Total	Seat Change	Percentage
Democrat	313	+97	71.9%
Republican	117	-101	26.8%
Farmer Labor	5	+4	1.1%
Total House			**435**

30,843. His campaign had undoubtedly reflected not only the aforementioned desire for change, but also the need for more responsive government policies, especially given the exigencies of the times. He had from the beginning been a great admirer of Roosevelt's philosophy and over the next nearly two decades would translate these ideals into tangible reform. But as shall be seen, he did not always agree with the President and would honestly voice his concerns when they arose. At the time of his election, times had grown well-nigh unbearable.

As has been previously noted, Utah's industrial workers and farmers suffered severely because of the close ties of those industries to the international economies. During the worst days of the Depression in Utah 36 percent of Utah's workforce was unemployed, and by 1932 farm income was down from 69 to 29 million dollars. Mineral production value had shrunk from 115 million to 23 million. Thirty-two of Utah's banks had failed by the following year. Helen E. Bunnell of Price recalled how difficult life had become for those who had worked in the mines. The husband of her friend had worked twelve to fourteen hours for four dollars a day—and was glad for a week's work. Hunger was not a stranger in many households.[170] On January 3, 1933, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published "Delinquent Taxes for the Year 1932. The article ran 63 pages with six columns per page. Most unpaid taxes were under 100 dollars, but some were as low as 4.96, others 3,400 and up. The previous day the Kansas City Power and Light Company

announced that to strengthen the "stabilizing influence of the family home" and in order to "provide young men with employment," all married female employees would be subject to mandatory resignation by July 1 of 1933.[171]

Despite the hope held out by Roosevelt's election, conditions continued to worsen across the country. Between November of 1932 and March of 1933 the country was in greater danger of exploding in revolution than at any other time since 1861. Intellectuals turned sharply left in search of solutions, while the coalescence of mobs and violence accelerated the disintegration of the cities as the "intuitive discipline" that acts as a societal mucilage broke down. Traditionally conservative factions did as well, as Milo Reno and the farmers' revolt will attest. Seven Latin American governments had been overthrown by Depression victims. Charles M. Schwab was not the only tycoon who believed upheaval was imminent. The Dean of the Harvard Business School said, "Capitalism is on trial and on the issue of this trial may depend the whole future of Western civilization." Years later Norman Thomas remembered thinking that during the period between the election and the inauguration "never before or since have I heard so much open and bitter cynicism about democracy and the American system."[172]

In the opinions of several political analysts, Elbert Thomas's very election had been nothing short of a miracle. Reed Smoot, elected to the Senate in 1904, was the Grand Old Man, a living institution. The Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified on January 23, 1933, had been passed by the states specifically to deal with the economic collapse (as it would have shortened the time between the secession crisis and Lincoln's inauguration had it been enacted in the previous century) by eliminating the four month period between old and new administrations, facilitating more immediate

attention to the emergency. “With the opening of congress but a fortnight distant, the political pool here on the Potomac is fast filling with the lame ducks,” Genevieve Forbes Herrick wrote. Senators Hiram Bingham of Connecticut, Tasker Oddie of Nevada, and George Moses of New Hampshire, among others, would not be returning, but most surprisingly the “erstwhile Nestor of the senate,” Reed Smoot of Utah, had likewise been defeated by a “Democrat and a professor” about whom virtually nothing was known. Hopefully, Herrick added, Thomas would speak more loudly than his predecessor, whose frequent debates in the nonpartisan middle aisle with Florida’s Senator Fletcher were so inaudible that “Nobody could hear a single syllable of their impassioned mime and sometimes it went on for hours.”[173] Fraser Edwards, Universal Service reporter, speculated that the “dean of the Senate may essay a comeback two years hence as a candidate for the seat now held by Senator William H. King [but] the once invincible apostle may find the return road to the Senate very rough indeed.”[174] Given Smoot’s age (he would have been seventy-three at the time) such a possibility was highly unrealistic.

Senator-elect Thomas, on a visit to Denver shortly after his election, condemned the futility of a lame duck congress and filibustering by men like Huey Long and predicted that these conditions would almost certainly require President-elect Roosevelt to call an early extra session. “Judging by the frank and unmistakable declaration [that war debts should be canceled], Utah is sending to the Senate in Dr. Thomas a man who will meet the issues squarely and in the open.”[175] As he waited to assume office, this “quiet, amiable man” did not allow himself to become “excited” over his future in Washington. “He’s a big man physically, soft-spoken, widely read, likeable—his feet cocked on a chair in his office where the walls are lined with books on the far east,

political science and international relations, on which he is considered an authority, [he] talked at length on public issues, but asserted he has not given a thought to what committee assignments he will seek in the senate. . . 'Only thing I can say now is that I'll be a Democrat,' he remarked with a chuckle, 'but rest assured that anyone who is a school teacher will have an opinion on everything.'" On January 10, 1933, he and Mrs. Thomas were honored with a "Sunday School Farewell" by the General Board of the Deseret Sunday School Union at a dinner party in the Lion House. Seventy-five prominent members of the Mormon community attended and toasts were given by board members who recalled Thomas's boyhood, church activities, educational career, and presented a playlet complete with original songs composed by George H. Durham.[176]

However, it would be months before he had the opportunity to express those opinions, for as the newly-elected Congress waited to be sworn in and attack the catastrophe, Roosevelt remained silent. He answered Hoover's congratulatory telegram with the vagary that he was "ready to further in every way the common purpose to help our country." What he was not ready to do was to associate himself with Hoover's discredited policies. For all intents and purposes, since the inauguration would not take place until March 4, the waiting country would spend four months in a sort of political limbo. Conditions continued to worsen. The 72nd Congress had begun its final session in December, but scant leadership could be expected from southern Democrats who had risen to committee chairmanships through seniority and had spent the bulk of their energies on impeaching the Hoover administration. "They had no mental resources adequate to the developing crisis," Rexford Tugwell later wrote. "The Congress seldom does; but the weight of the depression in 1933 had paralyzed it completely."[177]

Additionally there was considerable discussion of the cancellation of war debts. The incoming Congress would contain at least one member who favored cancellation. "A professor of political science at the University of Utah and a specialist in the field of international law, Dr. Thomas looks at the war debts problem with the professor's cold eye. As he surveys the international scene, he finds the debts are uncollectible, an apprehension that is growing, even among those who are most opposed either to scaling down the debts or canceling them.[178] Roosevelt, however, became increasingly convinced that cancellation would strongly alienate public opinion. Tugwell and other advisors strongly believed that nothing should be negotiated either way before the inauguration.

"Early spring that year was the most miserable time of all for the unemployed, but the agonized cries of the well-to-do, the managers and submanagers of the economy, were louder than theirs," Tugwell recalled. There was a terrific tension . . . the Republicans unanimously wanted it to be a Roosevelt crisis."[179] One of the most crucial problems, and it grew worse each day, was the hoarding of currency. During January it was leaving circulation at the rate of 100 million dollars a week—and [represented] the "most impressive indication of fear." Hoover implied that it was a result of Roosevelt having frightened the business community and in so doing had eroded confidence in the government to a dangerous level. Hoover's repeated harping on the restoration of confidence, or blaming the victims, was termed by John Kenneth Galbraith in *The Great Crash* as "seeking recovery by incantation."

In Miami a bizarre but horrifying episode had further strengthened Roosevelt's image in the eyes of common people. On February 15, after debarking from Vincent Astor's yacht, he was delivering an impromptu speech when five-feet tall Giuseppi

Zangara, a poorly educated bricklayer who suffered constant abdominal pain (probably as a result of gall bladder lesions) that had possibly caused mental delusions, stood on a rickety folding chair and fired repeated shots from a .32-caliber pistol at the president-elect. Instead he struck several bystanders and Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak, who died of peritonitis nineteen days later. But the courage with which Roosevelt faced this near-martyrdom caused people to "close ranks behind him" and validate their "belief in him as a leader." Raymond Moley interviewed Zangara later and was convinced he was part of no larger conspiracy. But Moley was further moved to remark that he was amazed to see no let-down in Roosevelt later on: "not so much as the twitching of a muscle, the mopping of a brow, or even the hint of false gaiety." Zangara was executed in Florida's electric chair for the murder of Cermak on March 20, 1933, defiant to the end. [180] "To a man," a *Time* reporter wrote, "his country rose to applaud [Roosevelt's] cool courage in the face of death."

Inauguration Day was chilly, overcast, and gloomy. The economic situation had continued to deteriorate. "We are at the end of our string," an anguished Hoover said. The President-elect and Mrs. Roosevelt attended church services in which FDR's old mentor Endicott Peabody participated. The ride in the open car with Hoover was strained and marked by lengthy silences. When Roosevelt arrived and made his slow and laborious way to the podium, decorated with vines and Grecian columns, the massive crowd was silent. Hatless, coatless, he repeated the oath after Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes. His hand lay on the three-hundred-year-old Roosevelt family Bible, open to the passage from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians that encapsulates Christian obligation: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as*

sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. [181]

Though the wind ruffled his papers, thousands in the audience before him and millions at home before their radios heard his high, ringing voice. "This is a day of national consecration," he began, ". . . is the time to speak the truth."[182] Promising that the nation would endure, he paraphrased Thoreau and spoke the most famous words perhaps of his career: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." This crisis, he reassured his listeners, is based on material, not spiritual want—the "plenty" that lay untouched about them did so not because of their failure but the failure of the "moneychangers." Our task, he said, is to raise ourselves up through social values that transcend monetary profit, but ethics must be combined with action, words that could not have but resonated with Elbert Thomas—words that described the moral center from which he had operated since childhood.

Roosevelt, his face "stern, set," outlined domestic and foreign policy in broad strokes, but made it clear that extraordinary measures beyond the traditional may become necessary. Should Congress prove sluggish in its duties, he would ask for "broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency." He closed his speech with a plea for divine guidance. And then his stern expression was transformed by his radiant smile. Eleanor Roosevelt remembered, "It was very, very solemn and a little terrifying." She felt the massive crowds "would do anything—if only someone would tell them what to do." What he had told them to do elicited a remarkable response: 450,000 letters arrived at the White House expressing approval of what he had said that week. In California Will

Rogers wrote, "If he burned down the Capitol, we would cheer and say, 'Well, we at least got a fire started somehow.'"[183]

Franklin Roosevelt had contracted polio in August of 1921; he was thirty-nine years old. Despite investigating and utilizing every current therapy, it became clear that the mobility in his legs would not return. (Some historians and scientists speculate that he was in reality afflicted with Guillain-Barre syndrome, since the onset was atypically late in his life and no analysis of his spinal fluid was done.) But the hydrotherapy he received at a run-down resort in Georgia seemed to lift his spirits, to the degree that he bought it in 1926 and opened it to other polio patients. It has become a near-cliché to compare his affliction with the stricken country, but there is a deeper truth that is revelatory of what he learned from it—paralysis, immobility, and terror he knew first hand. Jonathan Alter has observed that because of his companionship with and compassion for those who came to Warm Springs, "They rose, without ever walking again. It was a dress rehearsal for a conjuring act FDR would replicate in the years ahead, on a larger stage with a more widespread affliction."[184]

What did happen after the inauguration was nothing short of miraculous in terms of legislative activism and a profusion of executive orders and bears a brief overview to provide a backdrop for Thomas's own activism over the next eighteen years. Although he was no yes-man and more than once found himself in disagreement with FDR and his policies, he was overall a staunch and productive New Dealer. Frank Jonas pointed out to him in 1943 that "the people of Utah think you are too much of a party man. I notice, however, that you take even President Roosevelt to task on the principle of the balance of powers, or on the proper sphere of executive action . . . the people of Utah . . . might not

understand it, it being somewhat unspectacular and slightly academic." The response was typical Thomas: "I have always been an independent thinker and always will be. I am, though, a party man because I believe in political parties. I defend my party and its program. The President has been wrong on many issues. I have not always voted with him."[185] Thomas, Frank Jonas believed, had a "clearly-studied philosophy of life and well-formulated philosophy of government." His natural optimism gave him a faith in human nature born of the belief in the obligation to lead a purposeful life. Undoubtedly, Jonas felt, "Thomas and Roosevelt have drunk from the same ideological fountain."[186]

"The New Deal's Hundred Days began in an atmosphere of apprehension," Senator Robert C. Byrd later wrote. "But apprehension was mingled with excitement and exhilaration as members of Congress—particularly those on the recently swollen Democratic side—realized they were participating in a momentous period of American history."[187] Raymond Moley observed that Roosevelt's "complete freedom from dogmatism [was] a virtue at this stage of the game."[188] But Byrd is adamant in pointing out that the New Deal was not rammed through a Congress walking in lockstep obedience behind a masterful political pied piper. Economic conditions could scarcely have been worse; thirty-six of forty key economic indicators were at an all-time low; the national income was down by 50 percent, exports the lowest since 1904. Six hundred thousand properties had been foreclosed on, most of them farms. The most pessimistic predicted a red flag flying over Minnesota; spiked telephone poles and logs blocked Iowa cities, armed farmers disrupted auctions. But probably most surprising was not the physical demonstrations but that they were not greater in number or more violent—the answer lay in the listlessness of despair. But irrespective of whether the executive or

legislative branches were responsible, in the words of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in *The Cycles of History*, March of 1933 represented a break with the past: "The essence of that break lay precisely in changes from volunteerism to law as a means of ordering the economy." And more important than what *did* happen is what did not: no martial law, constitutional amendments, no nationalization of banks or other industries.[189] Over time the New Deal created the CWA/WPA/PWA that would build over 30,000 projects: 10 percent of new roads, 35 percent hospitals, 65 percent city halls, courthouses, health facilities, and 70 percent of all new schools, the Lincoln Tunnel, Triborough Bridge, electrification, diesel engines, the Washington D. C. zoo and mall, the Federal Trade Commission Building, the Fort Knox Gold Depository, and Boulder (later Hoover) Dam. Altogether these projects cost less than 20 billion dollars, which accounted for 25 percent of the Pentagon budget under Nixon between 1968 and 1972. (When one considers inflation, this is not a totally accurate comparison, but nonetheless it does point out the amazing number of government projects completed for what would today be considered a relatively small expenditure). It also provided the foundation for wartime and postwar expansion, including the Tennessee Valley Authority which would play an essential role in the manufacture of the bombs that ended World War II.[190]

Not that it was not controversial—when one Senator grilled Harry Hopkins about "make work," "the dole," and implied that in the "long run" such programs would be injurious to the American character, Hopkins snapped back, "People don't eat in the long run, Senator. They eat every day." Social Security, which became law in 1935, it was argued, would result in children refusing to support their elderly parents, workers abandoning jobs to avoid the payroll tax that would finance it, and, most creatively, it

would remove the "romance of life," code, one must assume, for the exhilaration of spending one's final years living hand to mouth.[191] Controversy was inevitable, but one issue that had generated much heated argument was finally—and relatively quietly—put to rest in those early New Deal months. Elbert Thomas and the state of Utah were instrumental in its resolution, somewhat ironically when one considers some of the doctrinal elements of Mormon belief and culture.

Proponents of prohibition in 1919 had been convinced that banning alcoholic beverages would eliminate most social problems; the issue of temperance as a panacea was as old as the Republic itself. But by 1925 many believed the opposite to be true. H. L. Mencken wrote, "Five years of Prohibition have had, at least, this one benign effect: they have completely disposed of all the favorite arguments of the Prohibitionists. . . . There is not less drunkenness . . . but more. There is not less crime, but more. There is not less insanity, but more. The cost of government is not smaller, but vastly greater. Respect for law has not increased, but diminished." After ten years, support had significantly diminished among voters and politicians, as has been noted. Women, beginning with the upper classes and eventually reaching down into the working classes, were attracting large numbers of former Prohibitionists to their ranks. Activist Pauline Sabin eventually founded the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform (whose membership numbered 1.3 million by 1933), arguing for repeal on the basis of, among other things, the libertarian stance that disapproved of federal involvement in personal matters.[192] This was the basis of Elbert Thomas's objection to the law, although he did consider drinking to be a moral issue.

Despite the Mormon religious dictum against consumption of alcohol, Utah was not without significant enforcement problems. Between 1923 and 1932 authorities had discovered 448 distilleries, 702 stills, 47,000 gallons of spirits, malt liquor, wine, and cider, and 332,000 gallons of mash; all of this was but a small percentage of what was being produced in virtually every small community and every urban neighborhood in the state. The manufacture of sugar whiskey was particularly simple, requiring only a 100 pound bag of sugar, a sack of cornmeal, and yeast, mixed and boiled in 50 gallon drums.[193] Because it was for the most part a rural society, Utah did not suffer the level of organized crime that afflicted more populous areas, but incidents of violence between bootleggers did occur.

The Democrats had met in Chicago in late June and endorsed repeal in their platform. In August "A Call to Arms" appeared, a pamphlet published by the LDS church calling on "church leaders" ("non-partisan") to "Mobilize Your Forces" against repeal. An introductory letter to "Stake Presidencies, Officers of Relief Societies, Sunday Schools, Young Men's and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations, Primary Associations, Church School and Seminary Teachers" began with the MIA slogan "We stand for law, for the people who live it and for the officers who enforce it." Repeal, according to the pamphlet, was the plan "of a group of rich men" (Irene du Pont was mentioned) to eliminate income and corporation taxes by taxing alcoholic beverages. Money spent on the necessities of life—shoes, food, clothing, homes, etc.—the reasoning continued, would be spent by laborers on "drink." Ways of combating this evil were listed, including formation of groups, game plans, involvement of all churches, political activism, conventions, and ultimately a national organization under the auspices of the

Allied Forces for Prohibition.

Repeal forces responded with a statewide drive; Senator Elbert Thomas became the first signer on the nominating petition for the prohibition repeal ticket. Expressing his willingness to fulfill his platform pledge, Thomas told reporters "The national platform declared for repeal. President Roosevelt and the 29 states are expecting Utah to support it, and Postmaster General Farley is depending on any leadership I can lend to this movement. I am happy to do this." The previous evening Thomas had appeared with attorney Franklin Riter, president of the Utah League for Prohibition, and addressed the regular meeting of the Jackson Democratic League. Several thousand were in attendance at the Hotel Newhouse, which the *Salt Lake Tribune* termed "one of the most important antiprohibition rallies in Utah. It was a nonpartisan meeting with leaders from both the major political parties as well as the rank and file of voters."[194]

Noting that repeal had the support of thousands, "sincere men and women who want to see conditions bettered are supporting the twenty-first amendment," Thomas maintained that their stand was based on common sense and "a fuller understanding of the law and its relation to good government." He attacked the use of "force" in government, asked for the removal of the "obnoxious principle," and traced the history of the issue back to the Prohibition Party of 1872. He made his own views on drinking very clear. In a press release he explained, "With me, this is definitely a moral question. I have accepted a standard of life which calls for no drinking. I have urged hundreds of others to accept that standard. For me to drink would be definitely wrong. It would be doing something which I admit is wrong to do and which I have told others is wrong to do. Therefore the question of the rightfulness or the wrongfulness of drink is not to be

discussed and is not being discussed by me."[195] He went on to state that prohibition violated the spirit of the Constitution, and that American citizens, knowing it to be out of harmony with American principles, refused to respect it.

On November 9, 1932, the day following the national election, the *New York Sun* speculated on how the members of the Seventy-third Congress, slated to convene in December, would vote on the issue. "In many instances," the writer noted, "the candidates failed to answer the questionnaire or returned such noncommittal replies that it was practically impossible to determine what their views on the subject were."[196]On November 15, recently-elected Elbert Thomas was interviewed by the *Salt Lake Telegram*; again he reiterated his belief that prohibition had failed because it had been mixed with "bad government." The Eighteenth Amendment had not been "honest in its conception," he stated, and was "only a compromise." The provision that allowed for the overlapping of state and federal enforcement, he believed, invited "dishonesty and shifting of responsibility."[197]

In any event, the front page of the *New York Times* featured an article on March 23, 1933, entitled "New York Celebrates with Quiet Restraint." The previous day President Roosevelt had signed the Cullen-Harrison Act into law, legalizing 3.2 percent beer and wine (both considered to be too low in alcohol content to be troublesome) and paving the way for the Twenty-first Amendment. As conventions were held and the issue was argued (for the last time), legislators began to feel the pressure. Elbert Thomas telegraphed his secretary Earl Wixcey in Washington from Salt Lake City, instructing him to meet with Senator Connolly of Texas about his probable call for "committee work in Louisiana about October fifteen" and to ask if it would be better to remain in

Washington until the repeal election on November 7. He instructed Wixcey to keep both inquiry and reply strictly confidential.[198]

Back in Salt Lake City in October, Thomas received another telegram on October 9, 1933, from Harold M. Stephens. Stevens was an Assistant Attorney General who had practiced in Salt Lake City in the 1920s and 30s. He was eventually appointed to the federal bench by Roosevelt until his death in 1955. "Disquieting reports reach us in Washington that Utah is likely to vote dry," the communication read. "If you can in good conscience do so I hope you will seriously consider making a public statement urging the people to support the administration repeal program." He need not have worried. Prohibition was repealed at 5:32 P.M. on December 5, 1933, when Utah became the thirty-sixth state to vote for repeal, thus reaching the necessary two-thirds mark for ratification of a constitutional amendment. President Roosevelt commented that the objective had been "greater temperance," and hoped there would be no return to the destructive aspects of saloon culture. Elbert Thomas's firm support of repeal, despite the religious practices and beliefs of a lifetime that dictated otherwise, was in reality no surprise. He had voted, he felt, as an American who believed he understood Constitutional principles and had been elevated to one of the most prestigious positions offered by his government. The oath he had taken on March 4 would ethically bind him to "bear true faith and allegiance . . . freely without any mental reservation of purpose of evasion." As a disciple of tolerance, he understood that he was morally committed to discharge "the duties of his office" in the name of all the people—and that an elected representative owes the people not only his labor, but his good judgment.

During the interregnum he seemed more concerned with his professorial duties than with his impending elevation to the most powerful legislative body in the world. He had specialized in international law and political science. One reporter observed, "The cloistered seclusion of a university campus has not left its imprint on Dr. Thomas. He is and has been for years active in the business world. His academic theory, it is clear, is tempered by fact. Dr. Thomas plans to go on teaching. 'That's my job right now,' he said. 'Time enough to think of Washington later on.'"[199] His teaching style was relaxed and informal, a sort of "slow classroom drawl" that would be quickened by political office. (Frank Jonas claimed he was never a highly entertaining speaker. He replaced Abe Murdock at the podium in New Mexico at a $25 a plate rally in 1942; apparently the audience found him less than stimulating.)[200]

Prior to his move to Washington, Thomas addressed a joint session of the Colorado legislature. The aim and purpose of government, he said, is to improve the lot of the ordinary man. "Government must make it possible for the ordinary man to live free from worry, to come and go as he pleases, to buy and sell where he wants to, to move from one station of life to another."[201] Over forty years later, during the Watergate hearings, Jimmy Breslin observed, ". . . real politicians . . . are involved in a hard business, a devious business that still tried to work for people instead of against them." Elbert Thomas understood the difficulty of effectively functioning in the reality of the political world, but never resorted to duplicity as a way of smoothing out the process. In addition to the aristocracy of birth, Jonas wrote, there is "an aristocracy of character" but dealing with such is a "delicate [business] . . . in an essay on politics."[202] In *Young India* in 1925, Mohandas Gandhi had listed the "Seven Social Sins;" three of those principles

had to do with morality in government and commerce: Politics without Principle, Wealth without Work, and Commerce without Morality. These ethical guideposts would become central to Thomas's philosophy.

Seventeen years after he took office, he remembered three crucial episode very early in his career that had changed him and brought him to closer terms with the responsibility he had taken on. "Three experiences in the Senate which came early in my first term," he wrote in his "Spiritual Autobiography," "are responsible for adding to my worth as a senator. These were the Civil Liberties Committee and the 'Huey Long Hearings,'—the Overton contest case. It was in my first term that I became chairman of a major committee. This exceptional experience added greatly to my responsibilities."[203]

He would wrestle first with the disposition of a disputed election and find himself waist-deep in the morass that was Louisiana politics. Louisiana has long had a reputation for the toleration of political corruption. Bill Dodd, former education superintendent and lieutenant governor of Louisiana, describes it as "a way of life" in his book *Peapatch Politics: The Earl Long Era in Louisiana Politics.* It is, he writes, "inherited, and made quasi-respectable and legal by the French freebooters who founded, operated, and left us as the governmental blueprint that is still Louisiana's civil and constitutional law." Some scholars have also attributed it to "outlaws, gamblers, and fortune hunters who came off the mountains and down the Mississippi river to add their flavor to the Louisiana pot."[204] Whatever the origins, the tradition of crooked government in the Pelican State was raised from the legendary to the mythological during the tenure of Huey P. Long. When his protégé John H. Overton was elected to the Senate in November of 1932, the irregularities were more pronounced than usual. Concerned citizens, representing a

diverse spectrum of Louisiana society, had had enough. They brought their case to the floor of the United States Senate.

It was not the only suspicious behavior the subcommittee had been assigned to investigate when it was authorized in October of 1932. The original members included Robert B. Howell (R-NE) as chair, M. M. Logan (D-KY), John G. Townsend, Jr. (R-DE), Robert D. Carey (R-WY), and Samuel Bratton (D-NM).[205] Originally, the public assumed, the focus of the inquiry was to be the 1930 election of Huey P. Long, but in reality was only authorized to investigate 1932 elections. It was a rough beginning. Chairman Howell died in March of 1933, and Senator Bratton resigned to accept an appointment to the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Tenth District. Senator Tom Connally (D-TX) replaced Howell as chairman; recently elected Elbert Thomas (D-UT) was assigned to replace Bratton. Obviously these reassignments changed the partisan complexion of the committee as well, putting Democrats in the majority. This did not, however, help Long's case, since Connally detested him and remarked during the hearings that involvement in Louisiana politics was "wallowing in the mud." It was, as noted, to be a life-altering experience in the political life of Thomas, and it is not difficult to understand why. He could have had no more polar opposite in terms of political and personal ethics than Huey Long. Although Overton's election would become the topic of the inquiry, clearly Long and his corrupt Louisiana machine lay at the heart of the issue.[206]

There was substantial precedent for such an investigation. Thomas was intimately familiar with the case of Reed Smoot, after a protest from "certain citizens of Utah" against his seating was presented to the Senate on February 23, 1903. His credentials,

along with the protest, were submitted to the Committee on Privileges and elections on January 27, 1904. Based on his apostleship (a body of men that "claim divine authority" over church members "in all things," including the encouragement of polygamy), in June of 1906 the Committee handed down the decision that Smoot was not the choice of the people of Utah but of the church hierarchy, ergo "[he] is not entitled to a seat in the Senate," but admitted that he was not a polygamist. The full Senate rejected the Committee's findings, Smoot was seated, and re-elected until his defeat by Thomas in 1932. In 1912, William Lorimer's election in Illinois was questioned on the basis of bribery. In could not be proven that Lorimer himself was connected in any way with illegal activity, although it had taken place, and he was seated due to insufficient evidence. Two cases were investigated in 1926. Frank L. Smith was deemed not entitled to be sworn in on the basis of inappropriate campaign contributions by officers of large public service institutions. Samuel Insull had contributed $125,000 while Chairman of the Illinois Commerce Commission, which were "harmful to the dignity and honor of the Senate, and dangerous to the perpetuity of free government." Also in 1926 William Wilson filed complaint against the opponent who had defeated him on November 2, 1926. William Vare's fitness for office was referred to the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections on March 4, 1927. The majority conclusion of the Committee was that Wilson had not sustained his allegations and that William Vare was entitled to his seat. Ironically, he was later denied the seat, his biographer contending that his past activities with ward politics and his lack of appropriate "social standing" kept him from office.[207]

The Overton case, however, was in a class all its own because of Overton's connection to Huey P. Long, a remarkable albeit unscrupulous demagogue who ruled Louisiana with an iron hand. Franklin Roosevelt had declared him one of the two most dangerous men in America (Douglas MacArthur being the other). For Elbert Thomas it would be a baptism by fire into the seamiest side of American political behavior. Anything but the half-witted countrified buffoon he often liked to play, Long possessed a brilliant mind and a gift for manipulation of the highest order. When Louis Brandeis said, "Decency, security, and liberty alike depend on the system in which no man is above the law," the words (and the sentiment behind them) were meaningless to Huey Pierce Long. He ran Louisiana like his own private fiefdom, and apparently was not acquainted with (or chose to ignore) the Magna Carta, at least the traditions that the will of the Kingfish should not be arbitrary or that he was as bound by the law as any impoverished bayou fisherman. (The idea that certain persons in positions of political power were not subject to the law has infected several figures in American history. In the much-publicized series of interviews with David Frost in 1977, Richard Nixon had said, "If the president does it, it's not illegal.") Despite criticisms of his dictatorial and often illegal methods, he had as governor expanded state highways, hospitals, and educational institutions. Immensely charismatic, he was wildly popular in the beginning for his programs (schoolbooks for poor children was one), his willingness to take forceful action, and his leftist populist stance against the rich, both corporate and individual.

John Overton was an Alexandria lawyer, a gifted orator, and a political ally of Long since his unsuccessful bid for the Senate in 1918. Aristocratic and able, in spite of his speaking abilities, he was too aloof to be an effective politician; he could never quite

convince voters of his good intentions. Huey Long was drawn to his respectability, social standing, and moral integrity, qualities he himself sorely lacked.[208] Overton was a major factor in the election of Long to railroad commissioner and eventually governor. When Long was in danger of being removed from office, Overton led an anti-impeachment parade in Baton Rouge in April of 1929 and delivered a Henry V "band of brothers" speech in which he swore he would be "standing or lying by the side of Huey P. Long." The impeachment trial, at which Overton served as lead counsel, was a hybrid of burlesque and vaudeville, but Long nevertheless escaped removal from office. When the Louisiana Democratic primary was held in September of 1932, John Overton, with Long's blessing, easily defeated incumbent Senator Edwin Broussard. For all intents and purposes, Louisiana was a one-party state (winning the Democratic primary guaranteed winning the general election) and Overton ran unopposed.[209]

Shortly after his defeat Broussard requested from the chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Campaign Expenditures in the 1932 election, which had been established in July, an investigation into the election he had just lost. On June 14, 1933, Thomas received a letter from one W. A. Brown, a bonded public accountant with offices in El Dorado, Arkansas; Tyler, Texas; and Shreveport, Louisiana. "There is no question but what fraud was used in this election, as is always used where one Huey P. Long is concerned," he wrote, "as he is generally known to use, fraud, in the elections [sic] of the State of Louisiana." He additionally charged that in the last election more votes had been polled in one parish than there were voters, that highway and school funds had been used to "gain his dishonest ends," and that he had used like methods to elect both himself and Overton. (Overton, he said, "is a much straighter and fairer man than Long.") Previous

investigations, he said, had uncovered "crookedness" but he implored Thomas to "see to it that the real facts are obtained and a thorough investigation made, as that is the desire of all the best people in state." It was the first such letter Thomas would receive, appealing to the Senate committee and federal justice to help the people of Louisiana root out "Longism" and political corruption.[210] It would not be the last.

When Overton faced Broussard in the 1932 primary, it was a corrupt election even by Louisiana standards. Broussard did not argue that he had won the election, but that "fraud and corruption had been practiced on a large scale." The Senate voted to reopen the investigation, which convened in the New Orleans Customs House to overflow crowds on February 3, 1933. It became clear from the outset that Senate counsel Samuel Ansell was more interested in exposing Huey Long than in investigating Overton. The hearings adjourned on February 17 and would not reconvene until October. On February 18, 1933, a telegram was sent to then-Chairman Robert B. Howell signed by thirteen prominent citizens, including a former president of the Louisiana Bar urging the Senate to continue the investigations. "There exists [here] a political machine that resorts to the most shameless political practices."[211] What the Kingfish had apparently not counted on, however, was the outrage of politically active citizens and their willingness, at the risk of retribution, to speak out. Most notably, considering the context of the time and the stereotypical beliefs about gender relations in the South, were a vocal and articulate group of women, foremost among them Hilda Phelps Hammond. Try though he might, Long could neither ridicule nor threaten her into silence—and the grievances she had with him went far deeper than his political misdeeds.

Born into a newspaper family (her father had founded the *New Orleans Times Picayune)* Hilda, smart and ambitious, earned an M. A. in English from Tulane and married Arthur Hammond, an attorney with the New Orleans Dock Board. She became a cooking columnist for the *Times* at ten dollars a week. But working for Huey as her husband did was not without its risks; in 1930 he suddenly fired Hammond in a symbolic gesture that underscored the reality of his absolute power over public employees. The Hammonds never again enjoyed a comfortable living and appearances to Hilda were everything. For the rest of their lives they were forced to struggle to keep up the style that was requisite to their social standing, and as far as she was concerned Huey was at the bottom of it. She became an inveterate enemy of Long, whom she described as representing "pure evil." And Hilda was not one to forgive and forget.[212]

On May 26, 1933, an editorial appeared in *The Hammond Vindicator* (Hammond is a small town in close proximity to New Orleans—in 2009 it had a population slightly in excess of 20,000) castigating Governor Long for twisting the tail of Standard Oil by calling a special session of the legislature to initiate a tax program for the trusts. The action may have gotten him a few votes, said editorial went, but at what cost? Popular as Long may have been initially, by 1933 cracks were appearing in the edifice. Despite the lobbying, first in Louisiana and then in the federal Senate (who did not consider these Senatorial problems at this point) efforts to attack Long's grip on the state's politics were fruitless. Hilda Phelps Hammond and her "phalanx of society women" had attended the initial hearings with enthusiasm, but when the subcommittee returned to Washington she decided to take more substantive action. On March 5, 1933, twenty-nine women were

invited and formed the Women's Committee of Louisiana to fight Huey Long. They would be a force with which he would have to contend.[213]

On June 12 the *Times Picayune* ran an article on "Heirlooms Given to raise Funds for Ouster of Long and Overton from Senate." Family treasures, some as old as 200 years, were placed on sale for a week at 710 Peter Street and auctioned off on "Sacrifice Day." The purpose was to raise funds to carry on the women's fight to get the Connally committee back in action. Oriental rugs, mahogany furniture, silver and gold flat wear, ancient French porcelain from the colonial period, a hair bracelet mounted in gold with a pendant gold heart, ancient wall sconces, mirrors, signed bronzes, pewter trays, silver-gilt partridges that had adorned the tables of the wealthy, "mahogany escritoires, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, silently told the story of many a love letter written on them by daughters of Dixie in crinolines"—all went on the block. "We are fighting to get action by Congress before Congress adjourns," Mrs. Hammond stated.[214] Part of the proceeds were used to procure the legal services of Sam Ansell, a formidable retired military officer of stellar reputation. Not surprisingly, Long used the auction to ridicule Mrs. Hammond as "Hilda, the antique queen, the Picayune damsel." By April, however, petitions had been presented to Vice-President John Nance Garner charging eleven articles of impeachment. For over two years prominent citizens and politicians had fought for Long's ouster. Former governor John Parker stated, "Psychiatrists have stated in my presence [Huey] is a dangerous paranoiac" and advocated his commitment to a hospital for the criminally insane to "prevent killing" (a somewhat ambiguous statement).[215]

Thomas and other committee members were deluged with letters and telegrams. In June of 1933 the law firm of Spencer, Gidiere, Phelps, and Dunbar of New Orleans

sent a nine-page plea to Senator Connally reiterating that "responsible and respectable citizens have communicated their anxiety to you," but with little response or action on the part of the committee. On June 20 all committee members received a sizeable file of articles, courtesy of John Holland, Chief Investigator, from the *Times-Picayune,* the *States,* and the *Morning Tribune*, making it clear that the real culprit here was not John Overton but Huey Long. The conclusion, by June 16, in the news stories was that the hearings would not be resumed until fall and would be held in Louisiana.[216]

Hilda Phelps Hammond remained committed and active. On September 10, 1933, she sent a three-page press telegram to Elbert Thomas, questioning how committee funding was being spent, reiterating that Overton's election was a "gigantic fraud designed and perpetuated by Senator Long, Overton's campaign manager, with the knowledge, consent and participation of Mr. Overton who is the beneficiary of that fraud and corruption. You apparently have not read the testimony," she charged, "since you and another committee member have told the press 95 percent of it is irrelevant." Referring back to the Lorimer and Vare cases (see above), she contended that those cases were much "narrower" than the resolution authorizing the Overton investigation. "You," she said, "are violating your duty through the continued inactivity of yourself and your committee is in violation of the duty imposed upon each of you by the Senate resolution authorizing and directing the investigation." Invoking again the Lorimer and Vare cases, she maintained "the evidence of record in the Overton case is many times more than enough to require Mr. Overton's expulsion from the Senate." The most pointed of her inferences, however, was that the United States Senate was under the thumb of Huey Long: "Senator Long has openly boasted that word has gone down to lay off of him. We

prefer to disbelieve Senator Long's statement but the attitude of your committee seems to confirm its truth." At one point in the proceedings, Hilda Hammond stood up, her patience grown thin with what she considered the timidity of the Senate, and demanded, "I ask you, is the United States Senate afraid of Huey Long?" She closed by appealing to the "name of decent citizenry" and urging the committee to take immediate and energetic action. Although she never played a public role again, the women she organized became the nucleus of the League of Women Voters, the Independent Women's Organization, and other political groups.[217]

Mrs. Hammond ultimately traveled to Washington six times, meeting individually with senators to persuade them to continue their investigations. Major national publications interviewed her, and she spoke in many venues across the states. But the theme was always the same: for over two years she insisted—and she was relentless—that Huey Long be held accountable for his many excesses and his outright abuses of Louisiana, both its legal system and its citizenry. Louisiana politics had been ethically questionable at best since Reconstruction, but what Huey Long had done—highways, hospitals, and schoolbooks aside—went beyond the pale. Broussard charged (he never claimed to have won the election), that under Long's direction, hordes of campaign workers had been brought in from state agencies such as the highway commission, the board of health, the tax commission, and the insane asylums. State employees had also been forced to make financial contributions to Overton's campaign and state officials had promised families of incarcerated prisoners freedom for their loved ones in exchange for their support. Based on these almost unbelievable charges, the Committee decided to hold hearings in New Orleans.[218]

Between October of 1932 and December of 1933, the subcommittee conducted three lengthy investigations in Louisiana. At the opening of the session Chairman Connally of Texas read a statement asking the public to reserve their judgment until the hearings adjourned. “The committee has been subjected to unjust criticism, and appeals to the press and public to suspend judgment until the committee completes the hearings. It is honestly and earnestly trying to do its duty. For a week it has been diligently examining witnesses and will continue to do so for two additional weeks. Then no just persons will be able to honestly criticize the committee.” But on November 11, 1933, an ominous editorial appeared in the *Times-Picayune* entitled “Time for Citizens to Arm.” Noting the upcoming gubernatorial election, the writer warned Louisiana that “Unless something radical is done there is no hope of an honest vote or a fair count in the January election. . . Senator Long announces . . . they will elect the city ticket he dictates. . . He has made that statement surrounded by armed guards.” Since, he continued, the people have the right to bear arms, “they have the higher right to go to the polls with arms in their hands and resist force with force.”[219] Politics as usual in Louisiana was politics as usual in no other state in the Union.

In late November the hearings began in New Orleans in the Scottish Rite Cathedral. One interested spectator was Thomas’s daughter Ednalou, “rosy cheeked” in “scarlet-knitted tam, scarlet-striped sweater and bright blue skirt,” making a “splotch of color” in the crowd. Although she said that ballot box stuffing was “pretty awful,” she also did not approve of women taking an active part in politics. “They’re apt to get excited!” she explained. “I like for them to tell their husbands what to do.”[220] Although Hilda Phelps Hammond may have begged to differ, when the hearings began to overflow

crowds, a colorful parade of witnesses took the stand. Long had issued one hundred telegrams from Louisiana prior to this convocation, demanding an end to the investigation.

Elbert Thomas had been the first to arrive on Sunday, with hearings scheduled to open at 10 A. M. the following day; they would last twelve days. The night before leaving Washington, Thomas had met with Logan and Connally and discussed the task before them. "I don't know exactly what we are trying to do. . . I don't know where we are heading," Connally said. "In other words," interposed Senator Thomas, "we have no precedent to guide us." Although other cases have been noted above, what made Overton's different was that it was directed at individuals and not questionable political practices. The committee was described by William Gaudet as "witty Tom Connally of Texas, judicial M. M. Logan of Kentucky, and scholarly Elbert Thomas of Utah . . . coming into dynamite territory totally unprepared."[221] Interviewed by reporters the following day Thomas said "There is no comment I can make. I do not know what the plans of the committee are. I was appointed a member of the committee the day Congress adjourned and I have had no contact with the committee. I do not know anything about it."[222] He would learn over the next few days. Harry Oliver, Monroe attorney, testified that Robert S. Maestri had been ordered by the governor to shut down all oil and gas wells belonging to Sam D. Hunter. Mr. Hunter, under oath, said that he had been threatened with imprisonment unless he contributed 5,000 dollars to the Overton campaign. Another Monroe attorney, Alan Sholars, corroborated his testimony. Later in the week the generally debonair and assured right hand man of Long, Seymour Weiss, was trapped in his twisted testimony by Senator Connally. Weiss admitted to issuing

mystery drafts and paying "dummies" fees. He also admitted that no books were kept, everything was received and paid for in cash, which means the Committee could come to no conclusions as to expenditures. Senator Long appeared on the stand the second day of the hearings (in the photograph of Thomas, who is presiding, he is clearly amused); serving as Overton's attorney he denied any wrongdoing. The Committee's attorney John Hammond could stand no more; in a rant (specifically directed at the members) he condemned the handling of the case, "crimson of face and with arms waving wildly." "This committee came down here to close this case and not to investigate," shouting "defiance and vilification" as the crowd (including Long and Overton) cheered. "Let him talk," Senator Logan said. "I didn't know he was going crazy." Tempers were running high, to say the least.

One of the last witnesses was the slovenly, porcine Joseph Katz, secretary-treasurer of the Choctaw Club, the Louisiana Democratic machine. He presented a striking contrast to an incredulous looking Thomas during his admission of destroying records of the Choctaw Club. City Treasurer W. S. Daly, also "operating treasurer" of the Choctaw Club, admitted and then denied raising 1,000 dollars for Overton. Irwin F. Williams, an attorney, described actions of C. S. Barnes, Long appointee as registrar of voters in Orleans parish, in refusing to scratch names of persons illegally registered.[223]

Some in the state remained skeptical. One newspaper article contended that "The conduct of the committee was so extremely partisan that it forced the retirement of both ex-Senator Broussard and his counsel, Mr. Rightor, on the ground that they had no faith in the committee, *Senator Thomas accepted* (italics mine)." But a great many Louisianans hoped for a successful outcome. On November 23, 1933, the *Hammond Vindicator*

published an editorial entitled "Sure, Senator Conally [sic]! Louisiana Believes in Fair Play." ". . . The people of Louisiana are good sports. They are too easy for their own good. Had they been more alert in safeguarding their own welfare, they would not be humiliated today by being the laughing stock of a nation because of their senatorial representation in Congress. . . It makes us feel good all over to know that you will make the investigation thoroughly and unbiasedly. . . Speed up the good work. Complete your investigation. Make a fair report to the United States Senate. That is all that is askd. [Sic] . . . It will mean . . . the release of Louisiana from the tentacles of Longism that threatens our nation as well as our state."[224]

By December the Committee had returned to Washington. On December 20, 1933, Thomas and the other members received a carbon copy of a letter to the Secretary of the Senatorial Investigating Committee. Also enclosed was a lengthy step-by-step narrative of the proceedings, with all exhibits, affidavits and documents property certified and attached. The package was from Burt W. Henry, chairman of the Honest Election League of Louisiana. On February 16, 1934, he received a letter from Francis Williams, a New Orleans attorney, setting the record straight on his involvement with Overton and Long. He had been a member of the Louisiana Public Service Commission in March of 1922 as an independent Democrat. "Senator Long broke with me in September, 1925, when I was fighting for a new Union Passenger Station for all the rail lines serving New Orleans . . . When Senator Long became governor in 1928 he vetoed the appropriation of the Commission to punish me" for accepting a political partnership with the other member of the Public Service Commission he had charged with accepting bribes from the telephone trust three years before. After a lengthy explanation of his work in public

utilities and several crucial omissions made by John Overton, he concluded by saying "I thank you for reading this letter, which I have made as brief as I possibly could and I shall be glad to furnish any other facts you may care to ask for at any time."[225]

One interesting communication came in the form of a hand-written letter from Mrs. W. R. Lence of New Orleans dated July 15, 1934. "The women of Louisiana," she wrote, "feel that about everything worthwhile [sic] is at stake in the Long-Overton issue. . . . A degenerate dictator has bankrupted the state and by use of stolen money he buys both electorate and legislators. This corrupt despot is wholly without honor and the United States Senate cannot afford to hold such a character in its membership. Some of the people with whom I talk are of the opinion that the Senate is retaining him out of fear of 'porcupine quills.'"[226]

On January 16, 1934, an exhausted, frustrated special committee reported that in a "maelstrom of political passion and bitter factional controversy," they had found unraveling the truth nearly impossible. They had spent $25,000, the entire monies allocated for such investigations. Agreeing that the political conditions in Louisiana were detestable, they concluded that Long's organization absolutely dominated the state and created "deplorable and distressing political conditions." Long had used state government employees in Overton's campaign. They condemned Long's "practice of coercing officeholders to contribute to political campaigns," but found there was no indication that any fraud had occurred that had affected the outcome of the election, and that Overton himself had been unaware of wrongdoing. Since no contested election was involved, the committee merely submitted its findings without recommendations. Overton, therefore absolved, retained his seat, where he was reelected in 1938 and 1944 and served on the

Appropriations, Manufactures, Commerce, Irrigation and Reclamation Committees. His chief interest was flood control, river, and harbor development. He died in May of 1948 while serving the term to which he had been elected in 1944.[227]

It would have been virtually impossible for anyone involved in or observing the episode not to understand the crux of the episode—and it was not John Overton. Louisiana politics in general and Huey P. Long in particular were in reality on trial. Overton was never the man on whom the guns were trained. One observer at the hearings remarked to him, "I thought a lot of you, John Overton, as a man, but unfortunately you fell into BAD COMPANY. . . So then, brought down bare, and stripped of vague innuendoes, the real intent behind the instigation of the probe can be crystallized without difficulty. It is the growing hatred in Louisiana, among some, for Senator Huey P. Long. It is Longism and only Longism they hope to oust."

Huey had bragged that the hearings would come to nothing. Perhaps for him, but not for Elbert Thomas. The people involved, and especially those on the fringes who could be called "concerned citizens," looked to Thomas more frequently than any other member of the committee with trust and for guidance. In the conclusion of his narrative/commentary on the affair, William Gaudet plainly stated what had been at its heart: ". . . it is Huey they blame and not Overton for the terrible condition in which Louisiana has found itself. Many of them have painted a very black picture of Louisiana and its politics."[228] Black indeed—much of the evidence portrayed Huey as a "Czar" who was in control of every department and every employee in his state. Some said that coercion, intimidation, and outright terrorism had reached such proportions that a republican form of representative government itself was in danger.

However, during the first week of the hearings Thomas had expressed his belief in the power of the federal system to protect the individual states. While Burt W. Henry, chairman of the Honest Election League, was giving testimony at the close of that afternoon session, Senator Thomas suggested that Louisiana could appeal to the United States government for the preservation of a representative system in the state. He referred to the article of the United States Constitution that provided for protection for all the states of the Union. "This phase of the system thoroughly interested Senator Thomas. To Burt Henry . . . Senator Thomas held out some hope. He reminded Mr. Henry that 'there still remains the fourth article of the Constitution.'"[229]

When it was over, endless witness lists, horror stories of political malfeasance, and the ever-present figure of Huey P. Long in reality had changed little. Overton was seated. But Hilda Phelps Hammond was not finished. As late as July 2, 1935, under the letterhead "The Right to Petition is Dying," she had written to Senator Walter F. George (D-GA) pointing out that the Women's Committee of Louisiana had been accused of making "scurrilous" statements by accusing the Senate of "whitewashing Mr. Long and Mr. Overton." "You have," she continued, "given us no opportunity to prove our allegations." Urging him to cite her for contempt, try her, and, if she be guilty, punish her, she wrote, "From such a trial I must emerge either vanquished or victorious. Senator, I fling down the glove—will you take it up?"[230] He did not.

That summer and early autumn tensions in Louisiana ran high, with rumors rampant of assassination plots and armed insurrection. Huey surrounded himself with a phalanx of body guards, but to no avail. On September 8 in a denouement worthy of the gangster movies popular at the time, the relative of one of his political enemies, Dr. Carl

Weiss, stepped up to him as he was leaving a legislative session at the Capitol and shot him in the abdomen. Weiss was fired on numerous times and died instantly; Huey lingered for two days. His last words were "God, don't let me die. I have so much to do." Two hundred thousand people attended his funeral on the grounds of the Louisiana Statehouse.[231]

In an interview on September 11, Elbert Thomas speculated on Long's death and what it would mean to Democratic politics. Noting that no third party—and the possibility existed that Louisiana would bolt the convention in 1936 and form one—had ever been effective in the United States, he added that Long was born "in the wrong place to do damage to the Democratic party." He would not have been able to draw off any Socialist votes—he was certainly no Norman Thomas. As for fascism, he stated that it "would have had no appeal whatever nationally. If we ever have a fascist group in America, its leader would be very, very different from Senator Long. His great strength was his ability to stand alone—probably no one has done it more effectively."[232] He emphasized that, despite his intimate knowledge of Louisiana political ethics or lack thereof, he had no intention of belittling Senator Long or his following. "Practically the sole comment on the murder was simply that it was not the way we did things in America."[233] The experience on the Overton committee had taught him much about how corrupt government *could* operate and how easily the system could be twisted to malevolent ends. His next experience, as he pointed out later in life, made him a more effective Senator by enabling him to understand more clearly what benevolent governance *should* do for the good of the people.

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CHAPTER 5

CAREFUL DELIBERATION

I am the people—the mob—the crowd—the mass.
Do you know that all the great work of the world is done through me?
I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of the world's goods and clothes.
—Carl Sandburg

From the earliest days of the Republic the history of American organized labor has been a turbulent one. Prior to World War I middle-class status eluded racial minorities and immigrants living on the fringes of American economic society. Their collective goal was not to escape the laboring class, but rather to improve the conditions under which they worked, the problem being most acute for unskilled labor. The only realistic path open to them lay in union organization, but such groups had been viewed with suspicion and their reputations often sullied by violence, real or imagined. The laws and courts typically sided with ownership and management, and before 1916 no federal legislation protected either workers' rights to organize or required employers to sit at the bargaining table with union organizers. In this way union growth had been stunted from the 1890s through the early 1930s. The first Labor Day parade on September 5, 1882, may have symbolized the transformation of the post-Civil War United States into an industrialized society, but the only major union organization in the United States at the time was the American Federation of Labor. After 1890, however, the A. F. of L. concentrated on skilled labor and bread-and-butter issues. Because of discriminatory

practices within its ranks, it represented only a small percentage of the work force. Despite the fragile economic state exacerbated by the Depression, poor bargaining positions, the use of state and federal military force against strikers and demonstrators, court-granted injunctions barring picketing, and a general timidity within leadership, any gains were more perceived than real. In reality there was no effective mechanism for resolution of grievances. By 1934 two thousand strikes, shut downs, and confrontations had taken place.[234] It was for these reasons that the Civil Liberties Committee, chaired by Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr., had been created on June 6, 1936, when the entire United States Senate passed the authorizing resolution. It began a series of exhaustive hearings in that year.

President Roosevelt had taken office on March 4, 1933, and swiftly began the implementation of programs to alleviate the immediate suffering caused by the economic crisis. Toward that end, in June Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act, which among other things gave workers the right to organize into unions. Although it also provided for minimum wage and maximum hour provisions, to the average worker its most important passage was "Employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of employers" (Section 7a). Since no power of enforcement was written into the law, its value actually lay in the symbolism for workers that from this point employers could not coerce or refuse to bargain with them. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) was later declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1935 but replaced with the Wagner Act (the National Labor Relations Act) to again eliminate obstructions to collective bargaining, the designation of

representatives, or to prevent other unfair practices designed to interfere with union membership or policy. It became law in July of 1935 and was constitutionally upheld in April of 1937. Nevertheless, conservatives saw sinister potential in these rights that were potentially "un-American," and resorted to liberally financed and far-reaching illegal acts of industrial espionage, violence, and the violations of the rights of workers guaranteed in the Wagner legislation. It was out of this illegal activity that the special Senate committee known as the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee was born, presided over by Progressive Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr. of Wisconsin and cochaired by Democratic Senator Elbert D. Thomas of Utah.

Senator Thomas first became aware of his responsibilities on the committee in a letter from "Young Bob" LaFollette dated June 22, 1936. "Following Senator Black's announcement on Saturday of the appointment of the subcommittee to conduct the investigation under Senate Resolution 266," La Follette wrote, "it was impossible to get the committee together." Noting that Thomas did not intend to return to Washington until after the Democratic National Convention, he also pointed out that the committee would be issued a meager budget of 15,000 dollars, necessitating loans from other agencies and departments. Thomas responded the following day by indicating his willingness to return to Washington immediately following the elections. Although, he said, he had been unaware of his appointment, "you can count on me to be as helpful as I know how to be."[235]

In August LaFollette wrote again to Thomas, this time informing him that some of the "detective agencies and companies whom we plan to subpoena next week may not give our investigators access to their files . . . but will appear . . . and refuse to produce

the required documents or to testify on the grounds that the Committee is without constitutional power to conduct its inquiry." It was a resistance that would characterize the battle for economic justice between private business and government committee through all its days. In order to preclude witness circumvention of the law, LaFollette asked for the passage of a resolution giving him standing to hold hearings in Thomas's absence should he be unable to attend. (LaFollette, August 7, 1936.)[236] Thus began the most extensive hearings on employer violations of employee rights in American history. Ultimately the committee would produce ninety-five volumes of hearings and reports that are one of the most reliable sources of information on labor-management relations in the 1930s.[237]

Witnesses began appearing before the committee the following month, some more reluctantly than others, and their recollections were often shockingly brutal regarding the tactics used by unrepentant business leaders to prevent union organization. On September 23, 1936, the cover story in the *Washington Daily News* relayed the testimony of Sam "Chowderhead" Cohen, a 266-pound strikebreaker with a record of fourteen arrests who had attacked workers walking out of a Remington Rand Plant in Middletown, Connecticut. E. K. McDade, another veteran strikebreaker, described the use of live steam and electric voltage on strikers. Two days later the *Washington Post* reported that A. S. Ailes of Lake Erie Chemical Company revealed that more than $500,000 had been spent on tear gas for use against strikers. The same article told of police "greased" (bribed), and plans by Pennsylvania coal companies to plant "sickening" gas in abandoned shafts to drive off "coal bootleggers." According to Ailes, one of his aides had said "I wish a hell of a strike would get underway" and "I am doing a lot of missionary

work in anticipation of a strike." Ailes offered no apology for his illegal actions other than to say "I'm not only improving industry but I'm improving society."[238]

Preparatory work on the hearings had not gone unnoticed by the editorial writers at the *Post.* On September 23, 1936, the day on which Cohen and McDade had testified, the newspaper published "Afraid of the Light?" Encouraging the subcommittee in its investigation, particularly Senators LaFollette and Thomas, the writer lauded the Senate for its work in searching out "undue interferences with the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively and to recommend remedial legislation if necessary." Condemning the refusal of "recalcitrant [company officers] to submit their files and themselves for examination," the editorial noted the District grand jury's indictment of six officers for failure to obey the committee's order. It was also pointed out that "certain of the agencies undertook to destroy some part of their records on learning the committee's plan to inspect them." [239] The editorial writer concluded that this "obstinacy appears to indicate only a fear—fear to stand out in the open light for examination."

"Operating with the precision of a pair of surgeons, Senators Robert M. LaFollette (Progressive), Wisconsin, and Elbert D. Thomas (Democrat), Utah, teamed up in alternate questioning of the witnesses," the article continued. "Figurative scalpel in hand, La Follette cut and probed through the secrecy-shrouded business. . ." Dummy committees, called "Citizens' Committees, operating on behalf of Remington Rand, General Motors Corporation, Standard Oil, Alcoa, du Pont de Nemours, and Ford Motor Company, had purchased gas and gas-throwing equipment. Senator Thomas devoted himself to "the more philosophical side of the inquiry, questioning the witnesses on their 'moral obligations' to society." Ailes defended the manufacture and sale of gas, the *Post*

reported, but added that "We don't want anyone to get hurt." The crowd erupted in laughter. "As Ailes left the stand, newsmen nearby were still laughing. He turned to them and snapped, 'You're nothing but a bunch of _____ _____ Communists!'"[240]

The charge that union organizers were "Reds" was certainly not a new one, dating back to the early days of the International Workers of the World (I. W. W.)., but in self-defense the companies accused of illegal activities took up the cry with a vengeance. On January 26, 1936, the Pinkerton Detective Agency sold a blue-book list of national corporations on the use of Pinkerton industrial spies in their plants and grossed nearly six million dollars over a two year period. However, the Pinkertons were forced to admit to using this as as a sales argument before Senators LaFollette and Thomas. None of the witnesses could admit ever having seen a communist, much less be able to define what communism was. "Throughout the testimony Senator Thomas endeavored to secure from the witnesses a definition," since they consistently used the term to label the subjects of their labor espionage. None could give Thomas a satisfactory answer. LaFollette was typically more blunt (throughout the proceedings the Senators used something of a good cop-bad cop technique) and asked, "Frankly, don't you regard any attempt by men to organize in labor unions as Communistic?" Pinkerton official Joseph Littlejohn of Atlanta replied, "It's Communistic until we find out different." At the session's close, LaFollette made it clear that the hearings up to this point were only preliminary, especially pertaining to the Pinkertons. He was right. The best—or worst—was yet to come.[241]

By the end of January as the disclosures became more sensational, both Senators LaFollette and Thomas believed the committee had begun to "go places." On January 29

the *Washington Post* reported that the federal government, under the direction of Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, had dispatched an attorney to investigate allegations of violence against workers at Delco-Remy and Guide Lamp Plants, both owned by General Motors. The National Labor Relations Board requested that the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals vacate an injunction restraining the board from holding hearings on "industrial espionage, threats, and coercion." Over the objections of several business owners and the skepticism of some Senators, Perkins indicated that she intended to go further than investigatory activity. She outlined "broad objectives" of legislation she intended to recommend to Congress, including regulation of maximum hours and minimum wages; promotion of "effective and honorable" collective bargaining when practical and possible; improvement in work place conditions, and the determination of a minimum age at which children would be permitted to work.

Revelation followed upon revelation. On January 14, 1937, the *New York City Sun* had reported that counsel for the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company testified that the company was forced to provide special protection for its properties because of the failure of Alabama law enforcement in its duties, according to Borden Burr. Senator Thomas pressed Burr for full explanations of the hiring of deputies and explained that only once in 1934 had strikebreakers been used. "A great deal of violence occurred. The State law does not provide protection for life and property during these periods of emergency due to the limited police facilities." One "slight, dark-haired communist" told the committee he had been beaten by local authorities, asked if communist leaders included Heywood Broun and Mrs. Roosevelt, and sentenced to 180 days at hard labor for possessing "literature advocating overthrow of the government." In reality, the "communist," one

Jack Barton, carried the *Nation,* the *New Republic*, and the *Labor Advocate,* an A. F. of L. publication. In a related incident Joseph Gelders charged under oath that Walter J. Hanna, National Guard Captain and reputed head of the secret service of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company (a subsidiary of U. S. Steel) kidnapped and beat him during the same episode. An Alabama state investigator said an indictment was justified. Gelders, however, said his Jewish origin was justification at least in part for the grand jury's failure to act. Gelders, a former university physics professor, was a representative of the National Committee for Political Prisoners and claimed to have been beaten into unconsciousness by four men. No action was taken on his behalf.[242]

The committee was beginning to attract national attention, the majority of which was positive. On January 8, 1937, Thomas was sent an editorial from the *Deseret News* entitled "Keep Going," which stood firmly behind the committee's work and the Senator Burton K. Wheeler probe of railroad financing methods. Thomas responded by saying, ". . . personally, I think the pressure to go on will be greater than the pressure to stop." He was not wrong. The following month, however, he did feel compelled to respond to a *New York Times* editorial in which he had read the following: "The LaFollette committee is running down cases of espionage by large employers, but does it ever think of exposing the tactics of labor union organizers? Would it be at all interested in charges or affadavits setting forth acts of tyranny and even brutality by labor union officials or agents?"

Thomas's response was stern and to the point: "May I, for your information, tell you I have asked witnesses of all types whether labor uses espionage methods. We have not learned of any labor unions that have been clients of any of the detective agencies we have investigated so far. . . We have learned that one labor group attempted to buy some

tear gas but failed. . . I send you this information not because I am in any sense out of harmony with the spirit of your editorial, but I think you should know that as far as our committee is concerned, we are out to cure evils no matter by whom they are used." Further, Thomas stated, the editorial implied that the committee thought it good politics to be on the side of the employees. "In my particular case I think that politically my position on this Civil Liberties Committee is a very, very bad one for me. It may be of interest for you to know that not a single word concerning any of our hearings has appeared in the newspapers of my home town, Salt Lake City."[243]

Increasingly the committee became concerned with industrial espionage. On January 25, 1937, the *New York Times* reported that the Corporations Auxiliary Company, an organization comprised of over 500 clients, had employed 200 labor "spies" to prevent strikes, paid the president of the CAC an annual salary of $75,000 , while five branch managers received between six and sixteen thousand dollars annually. "Our clients like our services and they pay for them," was the explanation given to Senators LaFollette and Thomas by President James H. Smith, and their "best customer" was Chrysler Corporation. Elbert Thomas was particularly interested in how, as the witness claimed, this improved production, increased efficiency, and reduced costs. When Smith responded that "we deal entirely with the human element and eliminate all reasons for discord, [we] achieve the desired result." Thomas was insistent: you are in reality selling something you cannot deliver. "It is nothing but industrial espionage to get at this 'human element' and so if a spy takes advantage of a weak-minded neighbor, that would be worthwhile information on reaching the human element," he caustically remarked. "Have you ever made your operatives go to church to see what was being

preached, or to a college to see what was being taught?" "All sides would be informed," the witness rejoined. "The President . . . said nations fell because they did not know what was going on in the realm. I wrote a letter around it and sent it to our clients." One can only speculate on how a trained and logical mind such as Thomas's interpreted this circuitous logic. In one sharp exchange three days later concerning what the witness maintained as the fundamental honesty of the "operatives," Thomas commented, "And you say they are honest. Misleading fraternity brothers and violating the oath they take not to reveal lodge secrets? . . . Can a spy be honest?"[244]

"Testimony Amazes Senators at La Follette Civil Liberties Committee's Hearing Today" the *Washington Daily News* announced on February 9, 1937. According to the United Press, William H. Martin, a former operative for Pinkerton, admitted that he had been assigned to "shadow" Assistant Secretary of Labor Edward L. McGrady while he was attempting to arbitrate a Chevrolet plant strike in Toledo in 1935. (He had not been, he said, "very successful.") When Senator Thomas asked Martin, described as "youthful [and] well-dressed," how many Pinkertons were in Toledo at the time, he answered, "Oh, there must have been 40 or 50." When he asked R. L. Burnside, assistant superintendent of the Detroit office, if he had asked Martin to follow McGrady, Burnside replied no, "But if he says I told him to, I guess I did." He also indicated that he could not remember why the assignment was made. "It couldn't have been because you were interested in seeing the strike continue so you could sell more of your services and were afraid he might settle it?" Thomas asked. Burnside denied this.[245]

After Burnside admitted that he believed a Pinkerton agent would have been justified "shadowing" Governor Frank Murphy should he meet with the President at the

White House, Thomas's questions took a distinctly more ethical direction. Asking the witness if he considered following government officials "proper practice," the respondent replied that government officials should have no expectation of exemption. Calling Robert Pinkerton to the stand, Thomas flatly asked about the ethical implications of such activity. Government officials no, he responded. Committee members were fair game. When informed that he had been watched without his knowledge, Assistant Secretary McGrady replied, "I think it is a terrible thing for private detectives to spy on Federal officials on Government business. But we expect it. We know or suspect that we are being watched. We have been told our wires have been tapped." Clearly the clandestine illegal activity was reaching into the offices of the federal government itself. On that same day LaFollette and Thomas examined loaded rubber hose "persuaders" said to have been used by guards employed at an automotive plant. Two thousand such weapons had allegedly been manufactured in Flint, Michigan.[246]

On March 22, 1937, Thomas delivered a speech on the National Broadcasting Network that discussed labor problems and the failure of illegal activities such as spying that had forever damaged the credibility of industry. "One directing officer of one of these labor-busting coercing, public opinion-controlling , and spy-employing organizations testified under oath that he had never talked with a laboring man in his 25 odd years of experience, yet he was respected by the great industrialists as a directing force in labor relations." Asked what government could do, he answered by saying that "it can lay down broad definitions of what shall constitute fair and unfair labor and industrial practices. It can also define by law what a union is and thus outlaw the racketeer and the dishonest labor leader, bring into existence courts or boards to enforce

fair labor practices and thus give the third party with public interest necessary to successful participation." But he again reiterated, "strikes are like war, are outmoded. For this great nation to assume that it cannot solve its labor problems is to admit a failure our history will not deny. The key to the solution is trust, confidence, and mutuality." Again he repeated his firm belief in reasonable discussion and the exchange of ideas as the viable (and successful) alternative to violence and illegal activity. [247]

As the days of the hearings stretched into weeks and more serious criminal behavior was uncovered, the press became increasingly fascinated by the "impresarios of this senate drama . . . unlike as Mutt and Jeff." LaFollette was described as "impulsive, incisive, relentless—impassively staring down witnesses while pummeling them with "trip-hammer questioning." Elbert Thomas, on the other hand, was compared to a kindly country doctor, his professorial background evident in his grave kindly tones, "as if he were saying, 'How long have you had this fever, Mr. Pinkerton?'" LaFollette was not shy about "barking" at reluctant witnesses, but Thomas ("no less persistent") concentrated on the "ethics of industry" and seemed to be genuinely offended by the moral ambiguity of the confessions. "You say you had a duplicate key made without Mr. Jones' knowledge? . . . Do you think that was right?" And he was a stickler for accuracy: Is any man who joins a union a communist? he asked. What is a communist? Thomas had also repeatedly pointed out to American industrialists that instead of spending thousands of dollars on violent and illegal activity, they might be better served by spending a little money "trying to bring about a knowledge of industrial relations." Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen analyzed it best: "the team of LaFollette and Thomas is drawing crowds to the show because they employ the time honored trick of Broadway—variety." [248]

However, as the hearings continued and testimony accumulated regarding beatings, violence, espionage, weaponry, subterfuge, and destruction of company records, worse was to come. In the spring of 1937 an already dangerously volatile situation that dated back to 1931 exploded in "Bloody Harlan" Kentucky, and on Memorial Day a lethal confrontation took place in Chicago on May 30, 1937, when police shot and killed ten unarmed demonstrators during the "Little Steel Strike." It was at this point that the LaFollette-Thomas subcommittee could turn a glaring spotlight on the oppressive practices used by corporations against working people and spur the growth and legitimacy of organized labor in the Depression years. [249]

Economic conditions worldwide, alternate fuel sources, and the decline in the overseas markets undoubtedly were contributory factors in what happened in Harlan, Kentucky, but given the limitations of this study the crucial issues in this impoverished coal town will be confined to wage disputes, dangerous working conditions, deplorable living conditions, the forming of unions, and economic hardship—issues that affected many mining communities in the United States following World War I. The events that led up to the Harlan Coal Mine Strike of 1939 actually began in April of 1931 when 18,000 nonunion miners, faced with a 10 percent wage cut, went on strike. The next six years were characterized by protests, riots, confrontations with the Kentucky National Guard, interference with the workers' mail, censorship of reading material, the forced use of scrip, and blacklisting. Strikes were sporadic, as were periods of uneasy peace. However, with the opening of the LaFollette Thomas hearings, Harlan miners saw an opportunity to expose their exploitation to the rest of the country.[250] A Harlan miner, Lloyd Clouse, who was slated to testify before the LaFollette Committee, was shot and

killed on April 24, 1937. The community was convinced the crime had been committed to prevent his testimony. This act of murder elevated the hearings to a new level. Harassment, beatings, intimidation, coercion, and evasion of the law were one thing. A cold-blooding killing was quite something else. The federal government rapidly obtained indictments against a number of Harlan County citizens, inspiring Editor Herbert Agar to write "A New Deal Indeed," an editorial in the *Louisville Courier-Journal.* Herbert Agar worked for the *Courier-Journal* and was a 1934 Pulitzer Prize winning author for *The People's Choice,* a critical look at the American presidency. In this tragedy he found hope: "More than anything that has happened in months, that announcement gives me the feeling we are moving in to a new period in America and that the worst elements in our system are gone forever. The LaFollette committee itself could do nothing but uncover the dirty story of murder and oppression in Harlan County. It could only tell the world what was going on, point out how working men and women were being treated in one corner of our country, and hope that the proper authorities would move. In the old days we could have been reasonably sure that the proper authorities would not move. Today such things are managed differently. . . The county protested against this 'federal invasion.' But the county had asked for it, by permitting fascist tyranny to flourish for many years."[251] Agar's giddy optimism about a just future may have been unrealistically euphoric, but he was correct in his assessment that business would no longer continue as usual. "Civilization rests on a set of promises;" he had once written. "If the promises are broken too often, the civilization dies," regardless of its wealth or technological cleverness. "A government which proves that it takes these promises seriously," he concluded in his editorial, "can count on the permanent loyalty of our people to our

American institutions."

Additionally an editorial appeared in the *Birmingham Post* in May of 1937, after the Clouse killing but prior to the Republic Steel episode. Exempting LaFollette and Thomas from the "Do-Nothing Congress," the surprisingly strongly-worded piece deplored that "within the confines of the continental United States there exists such a feudal principality as Harlan County, Ky., where private gang-law is supreme over all statutes, where slugging, dynamiting and killing are routine to the business of crushing unions in the coal fields, where the high sheriff is little more than a boss gunman for mine operators, where every artifice of exploitation and intimidation is openly practiced?" Disdaining the necessity of searching the "back alleys of industry" to "drag to light . . . such humans," the writer concluded that dirty though the job may be, it is time someone "turned the light into the dark corners of the social evils that breed there . . . Senators LaFollette and Thomas are giving the people light, and the people will somehow find a way."[252]

Without doubt the most dramatic episode came out of the national union campaign to organize steel mills. The Steel Workers' Organizing Committee, headed by Philip Murray, a United Mine Workers vice-president, amazed the nation by signing a contract with Carnegie-Illinois, a subsidiary of U. S. Steel, which granted a forty-hour week, wage increases, and union recognition. What had astonished the public was the widely known fact that U. S. Steel was the strongest defender of the open shop in the nation. Now it had recognized the new union. But there were still holdouts, which Murray described as an "unholy alliance of the independent steel companies." When union workers were fired from these companies a strike was called, which quickly spread

to seven states and twelve cities and involved over 80 thousand workers. Tom M. Girdler, president of Republic Steel, became management's spokesman and issued a letter to his employees in which he asked, "Must Republic and its men submit to the communist dictates and terrorism of the CIO? If America is to remain a free country, the answer is no."[253]

On Memorial Day the situation came to a tragic climax that no one could have foreseen. Strikers and their families, demonstrating in front of the Republic Steel Plant in Chicago, were attacked by police, who fired indiscriminately into the crowd of approximately a thousand workers and their families. The incident was not widely reported until an amateur photographer's film footage, at first suppressed by police, was released to the public. The LaFollette committee, having already viewed the short piece, moved to clear the path for a federal investigation and to determine what the scope of its study would be. The possibility of calling Tom Girdler as a witness was discussed, but the discovery of the existence of what came to be called "newsreel" film changed the tenor of the investigation and infused the episode with a heightened sense of urgency.[254]

Elbert Thomas had told the *Washington Daily News* on June 17 that he had viewed the film in three secret showings with other members of the committee and that it indicated "extreme brutality" by Chicago police in their "unprovoked attack on a peaceful group of strike demonstrators." The film, he said, showed "with great clarity" an attack by about 200 policemen on a crowd of strike sympathizers, including women and children. Ultimately ten men were killed and scores injured when the police charged with pistols and clubs. "I am surprised the number of casualties was not far larger. It is very much to the credit of the group that it showed so much control under great provocation by

the police. The strikers offered absolutely no resistance and showed no belligerence. It was a one-sided fight—if you can call it a fight at all." A line of policemen charged with swinging clubs, Thomas said, beating the running strikers until "windrows" of fallen bodies covered the ground, adding that there was no evidence that any police were injured. "If this film shows the whole story of what happened," he said, "and the Chicago police stand condemned not only of extreme brutality, but of being bad policemen." He described having seen men shot in the back, one woman clubbed until blood streamed down her face. He did qualify his statement, however, by adding that the film had been shot at close range and did not show whether anything had occurred at a greater distance to provoke law enforcement.

In reality the seized film had been shot by the Reverend Chester B. Fisk, pastor of the South Shore Community Church and footage of the riot only amounted to ten feet out of a hundred foot reel. The first forty feet were personal scenes of the Fisk family, the last fifty, fogged because of improper removal from the camera. The graphic ten feet were in between.[255]

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins moved immediately to create a strike board to settle the steel situation, calling the episode in Chicago an "emergency" that would have an adverse effect on the production of steel products and adversely affect commerce. [256] By July 1 the committee was questioning Chicago policemen, predictably on the defensive, and LaFollette in particular was typically impatient and skeptical of evasive and inconsistent responses. He claimed discrepancies existed between affidavits taken after the fact and testimony being immediately offered. When one officer, who had signed a document stating that a bullet struck the patrol-wagon door, was asked by

Thomas if he had read the affidavit before he signed it. "Sure," he replied. "Then you can't pass the buck to the stenographer," LaFollette snapped. The hearing was not without its gallows humor. One officer claimed that those in the first rank were "under the influence of marijuana cigarettes. Their eyeballs were dilated and red and once in a while they would break out in delirious laughter." [257]

Before the hearings concluded on July 3, 1937, a massive amount of testimony was presented, the majority of it related to police brutality and their responsibility as catalysts in a dangerously volatile situation. The most moving came from a Mrs. Marshall who had been wounded and taken by police to Burnside Hospital. She remembered tears "rolling down [the] eyes" of one officer. 'I didn't do that. I wouldn't do that. That is all I have to do, is to see that you get medical care now. But I wouldn't do that.' There were four men put in the X-ray room . . . and the man that I am sure died on my lap on the way to the hospital was put there and there were four men laid out there and four men were laid inside the dining room, and were placed on chairs in the dining room but they just hung limp there. . . . A woman came in with a small child that had been shot in the heel, in the leg, and the doctors seemed to be coming now and giving attention. I told the doctor I first saw, I said, 'Please go in there and see if you can do something for this man. I think he is very bad.' He looked at the man and didn't even touch his pulse. He looked at the man, and he said, 'Never mind. You go out in the hall and sit down.' When LaFollette asked the age of the child, Mrs. Marshall replied, "Eleven years old. The mother told me the child was 11 years old." After the witness's head wound had been dressed, she testified that a policeman dragged her through the hall, shouting at her to "'quit her stalling. He stopped in front of the elevator, hesitated, and said, 'No, I guess

you can walk it' and he ran me down the steps just as fast as he could."[258]

On July 3, 1937, Senators LaFollette and Thomas announced that their investigation into the "Memorial day steel strike killings" was concluded. "It's up to the officials of Chicago now," Thomas told the *New York Times.* Their positions as members of the Civil Liberties committee forbade any further comment on the evidence. When asked for comment on their reconstruction of the "bloody events," Thomas smiled at the question. "Our time will come later. Any action now must come from Chicago itself." But on July 6 he made a curious statement to the press: "Strikes are out of date and I often wonder how any intelligent group can participate in them." Alluding to the loss of revenue to both employers and workers, he stated "Even the Reds who are reputed to have a hand in present day labor unrest know they can't win a strike. History shows that every strike ends up ultimately at the conference table." Addressing the American Osteopathic Association, he declined comment on the committee's inquiry into the Memorial Day killings, but did disclose legislative measures pending "as steps in the direction of permanent industrial peace." One would provide federal protection to witnesses giving testimony before a Senate investigating committee, a gesture toward Lloyd Clause; the second would make crossing of state lines by strike breakers a federal offense.[259] In one sense, it could be argued that given all that he had learned about the injustices, hardships, and even violence that had been inflicted on working people, he would have perceived the strike as a hazardous and not necessarily successful last resort. On the other hand, one must also take into account his abhorrence of violence and his intellectual dedication to the belief that reasonable people could, in reasonable discussion, come up with satisfactory solutions.

From shortly after the incident until well into August, Thomas received a remarkable variety of correspondence and commentary on the work of the Civil Liberties subcommittee. Some were polite requests for the committee report, to which Thomas promptly and graciously responded. In every case the letters were answered with tact and personal attention to individual concerns. A professor of agriculture at Iowa State College commended the committee on its efforts, chastised the *Chicago Tribune* for falsely reporting that the senators had "hissed" one of the police officers, and requested a copy of the hearings on the conditions in Harlan County Kentucky. As far as the *Tribune* is concerned, Thomas responded, it would be fine "if they were interested in printing the truth."[260] Lewis J. Valentine, Police Commissioner, City of New York, thanked Thomas for a copy of the report on the Memorial Day Massacre.[261]

John Rosenfeld, however, vice-president of the Eskimo Knitting Mills in Philadelphia writing on June 15, 1937, was not so sympathetic; complaining of the "destructive activities" of the C. I. O., he accused the union of "by violence" closing up Eskimo shops "notwithstanding the fact that the girls insisted on coming into work." Eskimo, he continued, had closed shops, cancelled orders, and lost a significant amount of seasonal business. Ultimately the decision had been made to liquidate, which entailed lost investments and lost jobs. Maintaining that he believed in a "good living" wage and working conditions, he believed the selfish motives of the C. I. O. had destroyed a high grade knit goods company. Thomas replied that he appreciated "having the benefit of your thoughts on this subject."[262]

Others, although relatively few, were less business oriented and far more disturbing. One James H. Beatty, who was writing from a Veterans Administration

Facility in Wisconsin, immediately voiced his anger at the "abuse and one-sided-ness" of both Thomas and LaFollette concerning "Chicago Police and Communist (Known) C. I. O. Dynamiters and Tyrants, Destroyers and Over-Throwers of American Institutions." The police, he wrote, were scapegoats, whereas the real culprits were the "international hijackers" being used by "Johnny-John (Loose) Lewis to build a fake and phony labor union," Lewis being little more than a "Field Marshall for President Roosevelt." Accusing the C. I. O of plotting "collectivism for exploitation purposes . . .[to] overthrow our Democracy and enslave us all," he further maintained that they were deriving their power from a collaborative president and Congress. Claiming that he could be more "plain spoken" if he worked for Lewis, he berated the payment of union dues as money earmarked for Communists and the "workman's own suicide and future slavery. Any Labor Party would mean a dictator and a dictator would not exist over-night in this country. Should he once resort to shot-gun government, which is what President Roosevelt ordered. I will wait for your change of position. In order to snatch the roads into the first step of government ownership and so on until the rail-road man will be exiled to Siberia for owning his own home. . . How I would love to open up. Well I advise you men and the Benedict Arnold Governors of some states to return to your people." Thomas responded: "I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of July first relative to the work of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee. Sincerely yours, Elbert D. Thomas."[263]

A significant and enthusiastic response, predictably, came from organized labor who had always supported Thomas. Not surprisingly, his activity, visibility, and quiet empathy increased his currency in the working class community. The United Mine

Workers Local Union 6089 of Columbia, Utah, wrote on July 24, requesting copies of the committee proceedings, complimenting the work, and wishing him well in procuring the appropriations that would soon be requested. James Jardine, recording secretary of the local, also asked Thomas's opinion on the outcome of the investigation. Thomas responded by thanking the union for its interest and support and enclosing two copies of the Memorial Day report. As to the outcome, "That is a very difficult question to answer. The object of the Committee is merely to uncover factual information which will prove helpful in the drafting of legislation that will correct the abuses that are prevalent." Any speculation on legislative outcome would be premature, he wrote, but ". . .the Committee has been praised in almost every newspaper in the country for ferreting out the information and uncovering conditions which most people had no idea could exist in a Democracy." [264] By postal telegraph on July 16 the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers 404 appealed to Thomas and the National Labor Relations Board for help out of an impasse with Utah Copper. Thomas replied the same day, indicating that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) was "terribly overworked" as was the Civil Liberties Committee, but the end of the response was typically Thomas. ". . .therefore may I bespeak patience STOP Slow development through changed attitudes will in the long run attain more for all than a sporadic burst STOP The race is not to the swift."[265]

More attention was being drawn to Thomas and his contributions to the LaFollette hearings than even he possibly realized. The Senate Labor and Education Committee Chairman Hugo Black (D-AL) had been nominated to the Supreme Court and his confirmation was all but assured. Although Thomas was a member of the Labor Committee, he was not the ranking member. Senator Royal Copeland (D-NY) chaired

Commerce; Senator David I. Walsh (D-MA) chaired Naval Affairs, and both had expressed preferences for the posts they already held. Largely due to his work on the Civil Liberties Committee, Thomas's name was being mentioned as successor to Black as early as August of 1937.[266] Described by the *Washington News* as "a scholarly and liberal Western Democrat," Thomas was almost unanimously predicted by the press to succeed to the chairmanship. "At 54, Senator Thomas is tolerant, humorous, kindly and popular. In four years as Senator he has emerged as one of the stalwarts of the group of Western New Dealers who are coming to form the shock troops of progressivism in Washington."[267] Utahns were justifiably proud of their native son. "The people of Utah have a real New Dealer in Senator Thomas," a *Salt Lake Times* reporter wrote. "As one nationally famous columnist said: 'He's a man who knows what he's talking about. Only recently, when witnesses before the Civil Liberties committee would try to fabricate, he could always detect it.'" Despite this important and prestigious appointment, however, he remained active on the Civil Liberties committee, although it was understood that he would be unable to devote as much time to those duties and the fall investigations into the actions of vigilante groups that were planned.

His first challenge as Labor Chair was to accumulate sufficient support to secure passage of a controversial bill on wages and hours then before Congress. From the beginning he called for a flexible measure permitting separate industries to obtain any "necessary exemptions." At the heart of the disagreement, however, was the question of differentials between wages paid in the north and the south. Thomas maintained that employers in both sections were "entitled to a sporting chance to keep out of receiverships." Specifically, two interlocking questions were involved: whether the bill

should authorize lower minimum wage requirements in the south than in the north, and whether the specified minimum should be applied flatly or industry by industry. The bill called for such a differential and also provided for the creation of a board empowered to investigate economic consequences on individual bases for particular industries.

According to an article in the May 31, 1938, *Washington Herald,* Thomas had endorsed Southern demands for wage hour differentials and favored flexible provisions empowering a special labor standards board to fix wages up to forty cents an hour and a work week of not less than forty hours. He further warned that rigid scales might lead to higher unemployment, industrial dislocation, and eventual lowered purchasing power. He cautioned the Congress not to consider the bill in haste in order to get home, since they would surely repent at leisure. A Gallup poll published in the *Richmond Times Dispatch* on June 1, 1938, indicated an overwhelming endorsement by the public for a differential, 62 percent favoring, 38 percent opposing. Many small merchants and manufacturers had also declared that they could not continue to operate if they had to provide the same wages and hours as larger firms.[268]

Editorial boards were, however, becoming impatient with the impasse. On June 2, 1938, in "$11 a Week Minimum," the *Washington Times* offered the opinion that "the drive to kill the wage-hour bill grows more ridiculous and more disgusting the closer it gets to the showdown before the House-Senate conferees." Blaming an obstructionist South, pressure, and privilege groups for "shooting the bill full of holes," the bill is aimed "primarily at the famous 'chiseling 10%'" whom the writer accused of sweating labor and cutthroat competition. The President, he continues, has been advised to keep his "mouth shut," but "We hope the President will toss this advice into the ashcan; and that

he will proceed to build bonfires under the congressional opponents of the wage-hour bill."[269]

The *Washington Star* was appreciative and complimentary of Thomas's leadership. "There was almost a missionary tone in his voice. . . Members of the Senate have come to expect Senator Thomas in a spirit of contrast with the belligerence of some of his colleagues in debates on such important issues. A natural heritage and academic training help to account for the Senator's disposition." Tireless in cautioning against "let's quit now" attitudes, he repeatedly warned the Congress that, should they fail to act, the next Congress will do so because the legislation is on the "eventually must list." [270]

Finally on June 8 a joint Congressional committee compromised on wage-hour legislation by agreeing to the imposition of a universal forty cents an hour in all interstate industries at the end of seven years, but the amicable agreement was short-lived. In an abrupt about-face a call went out for a caucus of Southern Democratic senators to decide whether or not to make good on the filibuster they had previously threatened. House and Senate conferees defied the threat by meeting some of "Dixie contingent's demands, but left them dissatisfied."[271] Southern Senators were described as being "on the warpath" and issued an ultimatum that they would filibuster "all summer if necessary" to block the legislation. Through the patient and careful work of Thomas, however, a new bill was drafted on June 10 that satisfied the Southern bloc. The challenge to his leadership had been profound, but his innate sensibilities and respect for the Senatorial tradition of compromise had proven his formidable worth, both as legislator and leader.

Still, LaFollette and Civil Liberties still had many yet to be resolved issues. In an August 4, 1937, editorial in the *Philadelphia Record* entitled "THE LAFOLLETTE

COMMITTEE MUST GO ON, the writer warned that the Senate would "disgrace itself if it permits reactionary pressure to stifle the LaFollette civil liberties committee." Noting the meager expenditure of 55,000 dollars, the committee was applauded for its "historic job of work," having shone its light into the darkest corners of industrial life to expose labor spies, strike-breaking agencies, the "Harlan County outrages, [and] the Chicago massacre of ten steel strikers" which had stunned the country and paved the way for legal and punitive action. "They have opened the eyes of millions to the many forces of incipient Fascism in America, and have driven those forces back on their heels." But, the author cautioned, this has only scratched the surface. There is much left to do in investigating the Southern tenant farmer system, Nazi groups, vigilantism, and ultimately the committee should be made a standing committee. Now seeking an additional appropriation of 50,000 in order to continue, the committee would be the best bargain in the Senate.

Throughout the hearings Thomas received a plethora or correspondences, most of which came from outside Utah. Some were frighteningly vitriolic, others attempts to subtly but effectively undermine the committees work. On January 21, 1938, in a two-page diatribe from one E. Hollings of Salt Lake City, his constituent accused "Brother Thomas," among other things, of the committee's attack on the "Silver Shirts," who claimed to be America's bastion against Communism. (The American equivalent to Nazism, the Silver Legion of America, known as the Silver Shirts, was an underground fascist organization founded by William Dudley Pelley. On January 30, 1933, the day Adolf Hitler's advancement to the chancellorship of Germany, Pelley announced the Silver Legion would be the equivalent to the Nazi Brownshirts.) Maintaining that John L.

Lewis and Earl Browder were working hand in glove, Hollings outlined a "secret Jewish government composed of international bankers and 'Rabbi's [sic]'" operating throughout the world. La Follette, he claimed "is rated by those well informed to be a friend of Communists . . ." but the "Silver Legion" stands for Constitution and is opposed to Communist of or Fascist dictatorships." Excoriating Jews in Utah government (or friends thereof), he followed by saying "Don't think for one moment I am bitter against the Jews [sic]. . . . Communism and Jewry are synonymous through the world."[272]

In a reasoned and logical response (correspondence continued to be received by Senator Thomas, some positive, but a surprising portion of it negative) Thomas's two pages were eloquent. Explaining why the committee had been formed, he informed the writer that three reports had been issued, one of which he sent to Hollings under separate cover. This reading, he said, "will tell you exactly what this Committee has done and give in detail all of its inquiries and findings." Two hundred fifty witnesses, "from all walks of life," had appeared and its value had been recognized by legislators, industrialists, workmen, and the professions everywhere. " Three states have developed on its findings. Four books have been published about it." The inquiry into the Silver Shirts, he added, had been done in the course of the Committee's inquiry into the subject of employer associations and vigilant groups. Adding that "you must well know charges and insinuations that various subversive groups have had anything to do with the formation of this Committee are entirely unfounded," he closed by inviting the writer to submit any specific data or complaints and he would be pleased to receive them "and see that they are awarded every consideration."

Another member of the Silver Legion "deem[ed] it his duty as a Latter-day Saint to aquaint [sic] a brother of the faith with this splendid organization that has not once done anything contrary to that wonderful document that has kept us a free people. Our slogan is for Christ and Constitution," and warned that the local people are awakening to the "Jewish question and their connection to Communism that you are now being branded as a red and the power this Organization . . . will blackball you as a red," thus ending his political career unless he "end this Jewish plot."[273] Others followed. Mrs. Bess Epperson telegraphed on February 4, 1938, that his activities were "wholly un-American," as did a two-page letter from E. O. Wakefield. At this point it would appear that Thomas was becoming impatient. In response he wrote, "Suddenly from my own state come protests that the Committee is 'Communistic' misled and an embarrassment to the people of Utah." Again, he asked for substantive proof: "If you have any specific data or complaints concerning the activities or formation of the Committee, I will be pleased to receive them and see that they are awarded every consideration." Impatient, perhaps—ungracious, never.

Now that the Committee was in need of funding, anti-New Deal editors came out against further appropriations. On April 23, 1938, Walter Trohan in the *Chicago Tribune* accused the Committee of having "entered into an unlawful conspiracy with the communistic part and with the Committee for the Industrial Organization to place all American industry under the thumb of John L. Lewis." Although the *Tribune* was hostile to FDR, Trohan, the first bureau chief whose by-line made him famous, got on well personally with Roosevelt. The column also urged readers to write senators asking that the funds be denied.[274] Two days later a like editorial appeared implying that a liberal

New Deal conspiracy had "licked" General Motors and Big Steel from the start and contended the "'Civil Liberties' is a mask worn by the La Follette investigators to conceal a grossly unjust attack upon the rights of its citizens. It defends no constitutional right. It subverts them. It already has spent $90,000 in this boring in. The senate ought to stop it in its tracks."[275]

Nevertheless, the majority of the correspondence received was positive. Labor's Non-Partisan League wrote that the Committee was accomplishing work of "profound importance, not only to labor but to all citizens who cherish our democratic rights. . . . La Follette of Wisconsin and Thomas of Utah and their staff since passage if the Senate Resolution 266 on June 6, 1937, had disclosed both the brutal tactics of employers, typified by thugs and industrial espionage, and the subtle methods of the National Association of Manufacturers and its affiliated organizations" and have made more progress than any committee in recent years. [276] Equally enthusiastic support came from the Garfield's Smeltermen's Union No. 347, the Order of Railway Conductors, the Utah State C. I. O. Convention, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainman, the Trade Union Democratic League of Utah, and John Fitzpatrick, editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune.* Thomas indicated his intention to drop in at Fitztpatrick's office and "show you these two editorials and the news story from the *Washington Star* and the *Washington Post.* These two very conservative papers reflect the general trend from a spirit of misgiving and uncertainty about what our Committee was trying to do when we started three years ago, to one of appreciation of what has been done. It is nice to receive good words from such strongly Republican, conservative, anti-New Deal papers." [277]

One of the more interesting requests that Thomas received was from Frontier Films. The company had been founded as the Worker's Film and Photo League in 1930 and sponsored by the Communist International. The American branch's purpose was to provide support for labor strikers and their families, but it also organized drama groups, dance troupes and a Worker's International Relief Group. With the Depression the group came to believe that it needed to capture the struggle of workers on film. Changing its name to the Film and Photo League, its intention was to waken the working class and to support its activities through meetings and boycotts, in addition to establishing a film and photo school that would produce politically themed films and newsreels. Some of the company's works included *Bonus March, The Scottsboro Boys,* and *Sheriffed.* When funding became scarce, three members of the group split off in 1934 and formed their own radical production company which they called *Nykino,* an abbreviation for New York Kino.[278] One of the company's sympathetic supporters was Eleanor Roosevelt.

On April 4, 1938, Elbert Thomas received a letter from the film company suggesting that the Committee might be interested in becoming involved in a dramatic re-enactment based on the findings of the committee, particularly the Republic Steel massacre. Believing that the facts were not yet widely known, Frontier felt that a motion picture dramatizing the findings would bring millions to this realization as no other medium could. A broad sponsorship had been forming, including Congressman Jerry J. O'Connell of Montana, Congressman John M. Coffee of Washington, Bishop Francis J. McConnell, and Congressman Henry G. Teigan of Minnesota. When asked to add Thomas's name to the list, he declined, and understandably. Thanking Frontier for their interest, Thomas wrote that since he was a member of the committee "I think I had better

not be a sponsor if you are going to feature our Committee." He did add, however, "I shall be happy to act later." Given Frontier's connection with the Communist party, Thomas in reality, given the adverse publicity he had already received, had no other choice.[279]

By October a good deal of interest had been generated by the committee's findings, enough to inspire a two-day conference in New York City on the 13th and 14th. The National Conference on Civil Liberties in the Present Emergency, was held at the Hotel Biltmore on the 150th anniversary of submission of the Bill of Rights to the states. The national committee was headed by William Allen White, Colonel William J. Donovan, and Dr. Mary E. Woolley. More than 2,500 people attended from six states. Opening dinner speakers were Attorney General Frank Murphy, Senator Elbert Thomas, and J. Warren Madden. Panel sessions deal with Rights of Aliens and Rights of Negroes (featured speakers were Thurgood Marshall, Walter White, and Roy Wilkins), Censorship of Communications, The Law and Civil Liberties, Academic Freedom, Religious Liberties, and Labor and Employer Rights.[280]

In December of 1939 the Committee moved the hearings to California to investigate violations against the rights of farm workers, the people for whom John Steinbeck had written *The Grapes of Wrath.* "The western land, nervous under the beginning changed. The Western states, nervous as horses before a thunder storm. The great owners, nervous sensing a change, knowing nothing of the nature of the change. The great owners, striking at the immediate thing, the widening government, the growing labor unity, striking at new taxes, at plans; not knowing these things were results, not causes." [281] "The soft-spoken mild-mannered former professor of the University of Utah

who for some years," *The Los Angeles Times* wrote on November 24, 1939, "has viewed the country from the vantage point of a veteran member of the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee of the Senate told newsmen: 'This country is all right. . . Business generally is complying nicely with the new laws regarding it. We're in pretty good shape.'"[282]

The session in Los Angeles was brief, and on Monday, November 25, 1939, representatives of the farmers there told the committee that no worker blacklists, spies, arms, or violence were used by either Orange or Riverside County branches of Associated Farmers. Thomas announced he would leave the next day to meet with LaFollette and arrange for the full hearing back in Los Angeles the following month. While there he was awarded an honorary doctorate for "distinguished achievement in education and public service" by the University of Southern California.[283] (The following month he was also named among the top twenty-five Americans on *The Nation*'s Honor Roll, along with Eleanor Roosevelt, Charles Evans Hughes, Raymond Gram Swing and Elmer Davis, Maury Maverick, Culbert Olson, John Steinbeck, and Carl Sandburg.)[284]

Cooperation was not so forthcoming in Fresno. In a subpoena hearing preliminary to the start of testimony, one official, beginning with Sheriff George J. Overholt of Fresno County, declined to bring his office files on the grounds that he had to "protect his county." When Thomas asked Phil Bancroft, a self-described "farmer and reformed lawyer" representing Harold A. Butcher, secretary of the Contra Costa County organization, if he had engaged in any other business, he replied, "No, not in recent years—except to prevent the communists from taking over our farms and ruining our harvests."[285] On December 4, 1939, the *San Francisco Examiner* predicted fireworks, since twenty scheduled to testify had announced that their papers "are none of the

committee's damn business." The December 4 hearing was conducted exclusively by Thomas, but La Follette was to join him on December 5. Governor Culbert Olson was slated to testify, and elaborate on labor conditions in California and how they should be changed.

The headlines on December 6 were truly disturbing; Paul S. Taylor, University of California economist, testified in part: "There has been more strife in the agricultural industry in California than elsewhere because here the number of farm operators who really are 'agricultural employers' is so large, and because they, with their great number of employees, form an industrial pattern. . . . Plainly the activities of these small farmers, and the large additional percentages who employ little labor, are not part of the problem which your committee is here to study." Additionally, he pointed out, "another underlying factor in these agricultural labor troubles is the employers' fear of labor organizations with any substantial power to call strikes in their industry, because of the perishability of their crops."[286]

Clearly, by the end of the month the improvement of the lot of agricultural workers had become the aim of the Committee. When Thomas questioned George A. Graham, secretary of the Farmer of Orange County, and Myron T. Bonham of the Associated Farmers of Riverside County, the spectators expected fireworks. They were disappointed, but then they did not know Elbert Thomas. The committee wanted to know about the existence of blacklists, armaments, and labor spies. Labor spies were used. Thomas suggested pensions, and he had long been known for the advocacy of such. The exchange was strained but civil.

As the hearings drew to a close on January 24, 1940, Thomas told reporters "Probably there is no greater problem facing the Congress of the United States than what constitutes farm labor." Thomas had heard Arthur Clarke, executive secretary of the Los Angeles County Associated Farmers state that milk producers were confronted with strikes just prior to milking time and should not have to have their crops perish under threat of labor union organizers. Thomas responded by saying that the souls and lives of men are more important than crops. Clarke replied by saying "on the point of human relations, it is just as important that consideration be given to those workers who have demonstrated that they want to work and don't want to be forced to join a labor union." [287]

In the end the La Follette Committee issued two reports, one in 1938 which asked for more funding, and one in 1940 which condemned industrial espionage, violence, and strikebreaking and pointed out the necessity of legislation. Before the Senate Elbert Thomas said, "Mr. President, this is not a bill merely to help the underdog, and to protect him from evil practices. It is a bill to protect men who have been cheated." The Committee had investigated the five largest detective agencies: the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, the William J. Burns International Detective Agency, the National Corporation Service, the Railway Audit and Inspection Company, and the Corporations Auxiliary Company. Most agencies had tried to destroy their records before being subpoenaed, but enough remained to put together a case. Pinkerton, it was revealed, had operatives in almost every union in the country. The Committee reported that as late as 1937 labor spies numbered as high as 3,871. Espionage, it seemed, was the most efficient way to gain a foothold and wreck union strength. The Committee also reported, "Such a

spy system places the employer in the very heart of the union council . . . the names of employees who join the union, all organization plans, all activities of the union—these are as readily available to the employer as though he himself were running the union. [288]

In the end the Committee had compiled ninety-five volumes of hearings and reports. The inquiry failed to achieve any effective regulatory legislation nationwide that might put a stop to the worst abuses. Nevertheless, it shed light on illegal and unjust practices that aroused public anger and eventually smoothed the path for union activism and organization. Elbert Thomas, from a sense of justice and fair play, played no small part in that.

Endnotes

[234] Robert Zieger and Gilbert J. Gall, *American Workers, American Unions: The Twentieth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 11-19.
[235] Elbert Thomas to Robert M. LaFollette, June 23, 1936, Thomas MSS 129, Box 25.
[236] Robert LaFollette to Elbert Thomas, Aug. 7, 1936, Thomas MSS 129, Box 25.
[237] U. S. Congress, Senate Subcommittee on the Committee on Education and Labor, *Hearings Pursuant to Senate Resolution 266, Violations of Free Speech and Labor,* 74th-76th Congress, 1936-1940, Thomas MSS 129, Box 25.
[238] Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 4, 99.
[239] "Afraid of the Light," *Washington Post,* Sept. 23, 1936, Thomas MSS 129, Box 299, Scrapbook 1, 65.
[240] Ibid.
[241] *Washington Post,* Sept. 26, 1936, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 1, 58.
[242] Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 1, 51.
[243] Elbert Thomas to Editor, *New York Times*, Feb. 4, 1937, Thomas MSS 129, Box 25.
[244] *Washington Post,* Jan. 29, 1937, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, 61.
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CHAPTER 6

A FIXED PURPOSE

By 1936 Franklin Roosevelt had turned the Democrats into the nation's majority political party by forging a coalition of labor, the South, women, ethnic minorities, city bosses, and blacks. As the elections approached, it was universally accepted that the vote would be a referendum on the New Deal. Despite the obvious psychological recovery, the election was not a *fait accompli*. The balanced budget he had promised was still running on a deficit. Seven million people remained unemployed. Legislation passed as rescue measures had been struck down as unconstitutional. Besides—the Democratic Party before Roosevelt had been out of power for eighty years. Several of the great powers in the news media were anti-Roosevelt, and bankers who had contributed 25 percent of the funding to his war chest in 1932 now saw fit to contribute only four. And like the elephant in the room, the irony was that the recovery that he had supervised made it possible for Republicans to turn on him. It was, as if "In 1933 Roosevelt's role had been that of a receiver in bankruptcy, and the intervening years had been far more prosperous than anyone had then thought possible."[289]

The Republicans cut him no quarter. The "Liberty League," at meetings attended by women dripping in diamonds on the arms of husbands whose fortunes had been saved by Roosevelt's policies, called him "a traitor to his class." He responded by saying that he welcomed their hatred. His old Democrat ally Al Smith said the New Deal carried

with it the "stench of Communism." But at least the threat from the left had been removed: Huey Long was in his grave and Father Coughlin was on his way to the lunatic fringe. And then there was his opponent: decent but colorless Alf Landon, governor of Kansas. Afflicted with a raspy voice and worse speechwriters, he had declared in Pennsylvania that "Wherever I have gone in this country I have found Americans." Henry Ford liked him. He hadn't voted in twenty years, he said, but he would vote for Landon because he was like Coolidge. Landon picked as his symbol the Kansas sunflower. Roosevelt liked the choice: it was yellow, had a black heart, was only useful as parrot food, and always died before November. Roosevelt's appearance at the Democratic Convention was nothing short of a triumph. An hour-long political demonstration by the delegates followed the announcement of his name and his enthusiasm matched theirs. On his way to the podium his lost his balance and fell—uncharacteristic for him—but within an instant gained his composure, and the crowd was ecstatic.[290]

On the night of November 3 it was discovered that he had won the greatest victory in the history of American politics, a plurality of eleven million votes, which meant that five million Republicans had voted Democratic. He lost only in Vermont and Maine, and, eyes twinkling, said "I knew I should have gone to Maine and Vermont but Jim [Farley] wouldn't let me." Realistically it could be interpreted as nothing less than a mandate, and he intended to use it. As it turned out, perhaps not so fortuitously, as it would evolve into the greatest political fight of his career.[291]

In more cases than he would have liked, Roosevelt had seen the Supreme Court declare his New Deal legislation unconstitutional. With the mandate he had achieved on November 3, he believed he now had the political clout to change the Court itself and

assure more sympathetic decisions to his programs. It turned out that he was wrong.

James MacGregor Burns called the "court packing plan" the "miscalculated risk." Risky it may be have been Roosevelt's mind, but it was most certainly tempered by a touch of hubris given the victory he had received at the polls. But there were miscalculations, and tampering with constitutional tradition was one of them. Apparently it had been on Roosevelt's mind for some time. In a *San Diego Union* editorial dated December 24, 1936, entitled "We Will Stand Firm," Senator Thomas was quoted as saying that President Roosevelt would attempt no radical change. Thomas predicted "unequivocally" that the President would neither propose constitutional amendments nor attempt to pack the court by increasing its numbers. It was noteworthy, the writer said, since such an endorsement from so important a member of the administration could be counted on and because it was an expression of the "fundamental soundness" of the democratic principles of government. Perhaps dictators abroad, he further noted, can "wreck the political systems of their several countries." This nation, he concluded, will take no chances with the most workable system in the world.[292]

Weeks later, however, Thomas had had a change of heart. In a radio address printed in the *Congressional Record* of February 16, 1937, he flatly stated his need for judicial reform and sustained the President's approach. "Judicial review," he said, "is essential to the proper functioning of a written constitution. I accept the process. I like it . . . . I believe in adjusting our constitutional process in the simplest way instead of in the hardest way. The hardest way and the longest way is to amend the Constitution. Therefore I recommend President Roosevelt's recommendations at the present time. There is nothing drastic in them. . . . But a more drastic part of the recommendation has

nothing to do with the Supreme Court for the President's most important corrective recommendation has to do with an ill which every thoughtful person will recognize is bad government."[293]

The American Constitution does not specify the number of justices on the Supreme Court (the first consisted of three) but Article III authorizes Congress to fix the number. The Judiciary Act of 1789 set it at six, but geographical growth of the country and the resultant increase of judicial circuits led to the addition of one judge in 1807, two more in 1837, and another in 1863, raising the number to ten. The Judicial Act of 1866, passed at the behest of Justice Salmon Chase, reduced the number to seven through attrition due to death or retirement. The Judicial Act of 1869 (the Circuit Judges Act) fixed the number at nine, where it has remained since.

When President Roosevelt suggested revising the Court in 1937, his proposal was immediately met with suspicion by many. Presented first to a select group cabinet and congressmen, he outlined his plan. The silence was deafening. There was virtually no conversation driving back to the Capitol. Abruptly Hatton Summers of Texas, chair of the House Judiciary Committee, turned to his colleagues and said, "Boys, this is where I cash in." [294]

His plan included the addition of one judge for every judge declining to retire who passed the age of seventy years six months until a maximum of fifteen judges was reached. FDR's defenders claimed the proposal would ease a crowded docket that had resulted from the explosive growth the country had undergone since 1869. In reality the plan was designed to create a progressive Court that would rule in support of New Deal programs. He unveiled his program on February 7, 1937, and presented a fireside chat

regarding it on March 9.

Not surprisingly, sides were taken—and not just by his opponents. Mutiny could be found in his own ranks. As Burns put it, on the Democratic side Carter Glass supplied the moral indignation and Burton K. Wheeler and Joseph O'Mahoney the liberal veneer, while middle-of-the-road Democrats like Royal S. Copeland of New York, Frederick Van Nuys of Indiana and Tom Connally furnished the anchor line of votes. Against them was aligned a solid core of New Dealers . . . a score of senators were—openly at least—on the fence.[295]

Still, Elbert Thomas had stood behind him. On February 20, 1937, at a luncheon for sixty citizens held to discuss the issue, the *Salt Lake Times* reported that Thomas "stoutly" supported the President's plan for court reform. "The President's recommendations," he stated, "are in no sense as harsh as most of the critics of the Supreme Court have been. The President's recommendation to the ordinary law student are mild. . . . If the President of the United States plays out of bounds and uses his veto power to such an extent that he coerces congress, or if he uses an expression which first came into American politics in the discussion against President Tyler over his vetoes, if he uses the expression 'must' in regard to laws we cease to be a democracy and become a dictatorship." An attendee and opponent Mr. Burton W. Musser remarked that "The reason we have had so much legislation during the last four years which conflicted with the constitution is because the chief executive has usurped the function of the legislative branch of the government. You know that to be true."[296]

The climax of Thomas's support for the President's judicial plan came in Chicago in a town hall meeting debate on March 30, 1937. His opponent was former Kansas

governor Henry J. Allen, who claimed that the suggested change to the judiciary was precisely the way in which Italy and Germany had started down the road to dictatorship. Thomas adamantly disagreed. Stating that Roosevelt's plan was worth studying and should not be labeled something as simple as "court packing," he continued that the number nine was not graven in stone. Adding justices, he said, was no different than adding states to the union as the population grew—and no more dangerous. Between 1920 and 1933 Thomas had clearly spoken for reform and the progressive thought he believed was clearly necessary to move the country forward. It is, he said, "not only America's right but duty." [297]

However, this was a battle Roosevelt was destined to lose, and along with it the unity of the coalition he had so carefully created. Ultimately that was perhaps the real tragedy. The end of the fight, in Burns' word, was "anticlimactic." The struggle, probably inevitably, degenerated into a struggle over the Democratic leadership of the Senate. In that struggle the President remained neutral, not because he was but because of the "custom that forbids president interference in the Senate's internal affairs."[298] One mistake seemed to follow another, the debate still rages as to how such a masterful politician could have made such a mess. In the end, any court reform would have been an uphill task, and simply because of the reverence held for the Court and the legal structure of the Constitution itself. It can be argued that the plan was weak in its inception, its proposals, and its tactics. It was Roosevelt's first crushing defeat, and yet in the end he did not lose the war. The Court began to swing left and deaths and resignations eventually allowed the President to make a total of eleven appointees.

The President's attempt to manipulate the Court was not his only mistake that

year. The coalition, as a result of the judicial fight, was beginning to show significant fissures. In typical Rooseveltian style he smiled his radiant smile but was shaken by his failure. He went on the campaign trail that fall both to reward and punish. The crowds, as usual, were huge, but the electoral results would not be what he expected. Those whom he had set out to chastise for their reluctance in supporting his court plan in most cases were not. Additionally, a harsh economic decline set in. In Burns' words, "Wave after wave of selling hit the market and spilled stocks to new lows."[299] And to paraphrase Burns, his deficiencies as an economist were as lacking as his gifts as a politician. In addition to domestic problems, he would soon be forced to deal with foreign policy issues that would grow to Biblical proportions.

Nineteen-thirty-eight was an election year—and the United States was in an isolationist mood. Elbert Thomas was facing his first re-election campaign and the Republicans would nominate a formidable opponent. Franklin S. Harris had been born in Benjamin County before statehood on August 29, 1884. In the 1890s his family moved to the Mormon Colonies in the state of Chihuahua, but he returned to the United States for his early studies. He received a doctorate at Cornell in agriculture and subsequently served as the agriculture department and head of the experiment station at Utah State University (then Utah State Agricultural College). He had left Brigham Young University to take that position and was its president from 1921 until 1945. His administration was the longest in BYU history and saw the first granting of master's degrees. Setting up several colleges, he established the College of Fine and Performing Arts with Gerrit De Jong. He determined on coming to BYU that he would make the University a center of religious scholarship and his first priority was to increase the contents of the library—the

first building during his tenure was the library. He would later leave Brigham Young to become president of Utah State University in Logan. In 1923 he had been made a member of the General Board of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association and served missions in Japan and in Syria in 1927, where he founded a Jewish colony. Needless to say, his religious credentials within the Mormon Church were substantial.[300]

Not atypically Thomas took the high road and ran on the record of the New Deal. His first endorsement came from Roosevelt himself on July 13, 1938. At Malta, Colorado, he asked Governor Blood, "And how does it look for Elbert?" The governor assured the President that it looked very well indeed.[301] But later, on October 7, 1938, Thomas warned that Democratic Party workers must guard against the opposition "outdoing us in wanting to embrace our leader and his whole program." [302]

At the Democratic Convention on October 7, 1938, there was unqualified endorsement of the New Deal. The platform was adopted unanimously in a "a setting of complete harmony" in Ogden. "We favor and will support the progress of the Federal Government in its soil conservation, production control, and price stabilizing activities in the interest of agriculture . . . We present to the people of the State of Utah congressional candidates with a labor record that transcends criticism. . . We believe that the stability of the community is largely dependent upon its home owners. We pledge ourselves to enact into law such measures as will encourage home ownership."[303]

Franklin Harris went a different way. In a letter to State Democratic Headquarters on October 20, 1938, a writer who signed himself simply "N. Y. A Worker," Harris was accused of using government workers to maintain upkeep on his house and gardens, having sent 40,000 illustrated pamphlets extolling his virtues at Brigham Young

University expense, but probably most questionably ethical were the campaign letters to all bishops of the Mormon Church and letters to all former BYU students pleading his cause, again at University expense. The latter created a firestorm of sorts, which shall be dealt with below.[304]

On October 21, 1938, the *Salt Lake Times* asked Harris for answers. (The *Salt Lake Times* was a newspaper of record first appearing in 1883 addressing issues in Utah's courts, publishing public notices and commercial information. Since 2007 it has been a weekly). Is it true that your major support comes from big money and "Old Guard" Republicans? Do you realistically have any hope of being effective for the voters of Utah? What are your grievances with the Roosevelt administration? Is it true that your literature has been printed *gratis* by Brigham Young University? Can you point out any omissions or commissions on the part of Senator Thomas? And most seriously, do you support the "Dear Bishops" letters? No response that this writer could find answered these questions. Then a disquieting letter arrived at Harris's headquarter (or College Hill). Gordon Taylor Hyde was determined to take the candidate to task. On October 25, 1938, he began by telling Harris that his letter (Hyde was a bishop of the Ensign Ward) "was at hand." Quoting Harris he said, "In your position as a leader in the community you are, or course, constantly finding examples of individuals who are more willing to receive help from the public than to earn what they get by their own efforts." In his experience, he writes, "I have never found [in these three years of depression] a case where the head of a family has not been willing to work for what he has received. Pinning Harris down further, the writer asked which government programs he would pick for elimination? CCC? WPA? HOLC? Citing a litany of statistics, he enumerated the improvements such

projects had brought to the state of Utah, despite what Harris had called the "unheard-of spree of spending." In conclusion he noted that of in the opinion of "many other Bishops," without these programs, it "would be impossible to care for the unemployed members of our Church. I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the government assistance which has been rendered to the unemployed." In closing, he indicates his intention to send, at his own expense, copies of the letter.[305]

Characterized as a "true son of Mormon from hardy Mormon stock, a brilliant scholar from parents who had trekked across the plains and spent several years of his youth as a missionary for his church,"[306] Thomas chose to run on his own record and the achievements of the New Deal. In a series of speeches, he noted that he had been called "everything—a liar, a shirker of duty, and now a communist. Everyone who knows me knows these charges are false." Throughout Utah on the campaign trail he reiterated what Roosevelt's programs had done to improve the lives of ordinary Utahns. One hundred twenty eight million dollars had been spent by the New Deal in Utah, and "I am told reliably that for every federal dollar of taxation from Utah we get back six dollars in federal public works."[307] Characterized as an "humanitarian," he had stood shoulder to shoulder with President Roosevelt "in a gallant effort to improve the lot of the common man," having "defended the cause of twenty million white collar workers against inflation and discriminatory wage increases." As a member of the Civil Liberties Committee he had helped expose factory and labor terrorism and advocated full employment and better standards of living for all.

Repeatedly he hit the theme of waste, and how much revenue had been generated by government spending. The New Deal, he claimed, had conserved both resources and

men. In 1932, he said, "the New Deal was a rally cry. It typified the American spirit of 'up and at it.'" Defeatists, he claimed, had been voted out and the New Deal came to mean economic security, business, security, and welfare based on trust. The New Deal had restored faith—business energy could once again be put in constructive hands instead of being diluted by worry. The list went on: farm welfare, independent agriculture, conservation of natural resources, better roads, finer public buildings, greater recreation areas, education, earned leisure, and a decent old age. Nor was foreign policy neglected. Thomas envisioned a "retreat from Imperialism and the Dollar Diplomacy of the past generation. . . . The New Deal Means cooperation with the Nations of the world in preserving peace. . . .The New Deal means the bringing to light baneful practices of those who willfully profit from misfortune of others. He concluded by making a prediction: "One hundred years from now when teachers ask their pupils what the meaning of the New Deal was, the answer will be something like this—'When the Constitution of the United States was set up the Federal Government was made for money power, but a few people got control of the money and kept it until 1933, when the New Deal came along and gave the control of money back to the Government of the United States. The New Deal means as definite a break in the political history of the United States as did the setting up of the Constitution . . .'"[308]

It was an active and energetic campaign throughout which the candidate was visible and vocal. Roosevelt's photographs and achievements, particularly in his farm programs, were used at every opportunity, but Thomas needing no propping up. "Since coming home in July, I have spent much time making speeches on behalf of the Democratic ticket. I have campaigned in all but four counties of the State. I have never

seen the Democratic Party as united as it is this year. . . . [a] hope which I had six years ago of seeing a completely united party has been fulfilled." A "Rally for All Citizens" was held in the Stake Tabernacle on October 26 so that Thomas could inform citizens both of his recent trip to Europe and to explain the human side of the New Deal. Then he took on the Republicans, but always on the issues and never on the basis of personalities. "A party with no program, with an organization which runs in all directions, opposing first, all the New Deal programs, then promising more, ridiculing all that has been done for the farmer and offering nothing . . ." He was, he said, convinced that the margin would be greater than it had been in 1932.[309]

A letter went out to the former students of Thomas. "An insidious attempt is being made by the enemies of Senator Thomas to raise a suspicion in the minds of the voters of this State that he subscribes to political beliefs calculated to undermine fundamental American institutions. The infamy of such a charge is best known to the hundreds of students who have come out of his classes on government and constitutional law, with a deeper reverence for our form of government and a finer respect for our constitution. The Senator's views have not changed . . . the fair minded among them . . . will indignantly reject the slightest suggestion that there is anything un-American in his background or political faith." Thomas responded: "Only someone with a perverted mind could ever ascribe any other state of mind to me. . . . Perhaps I have taken this campaign too seriously. I am not a thick skinned individual even if I am in politics. Some things said about me have hurt me. I hope I shall not be guilty of hurting anyone else. I want to thank my supporters for a clean campaign."[310]

His campaign literature was not atypically aboveboard, but on occasion got a little rougher. In a full page ad in the *Tribune* on October 28, 1938, Harris was castigated for the "bishop letters." Regrettably for Harris, this tactic had backfired. Entitled "The Good Doctor Harris Gets a Kickback," letters were published that repudiated the tactic. A. Bishop wrote, "By the way, just what is your program? What training, if any, have you had for statesmanship? Frankly, don't you think Senator Thomas, from his high standing in the Senate and with President Roosevelt, can't do things for Utah that you could not hope to do? I can't believe that the President has exhibited the greatest statesmanship in the world today—for help for the helpless—for equality of opportunity for all classes of citizens—and the peace of the world." [311]

He ran on his record and the benefits that the New Deal had brought to Utah and how much he still had left to do. He did, however, say in one brochure " TO ELECT HARRIS WOULD BE TO ELECT SOMEONE OFFENSIVE TO THE ADMINISTRATION—IT WOULD BE A SLAP IN THE FACT TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT." Franklin Harris, on the other hand, was more outspoken, publishing an ad the day before the election, November 8, 1938, in the *Salt Lake Tribune,* claiming that Thomas should be defeated on the basis of his own record. He was accused of deserting his post, undermining government (the court plan), being the "choice of Communists . . . and every other 'Red' and radical enemy of our institutions, being ultra pro-labor, anti-small business, and intimidating voters." Democrats countered with a flyer claiming that Republicans would disfranchise old-age pensioners, government project workers, veterans, and widows with children.[312]

Support came from the entire state. The Piute County weekly newspaper encouraged voters to "Vote the Straight Democratic Ticket," noting that the stockman, the miner, the worker, generally in every phase of professional or social welfare, all have had formidable forces with which to deal, but "all of them have received, or are receiving attention and consideration." [313] Speaking in Tooele, Thomas noted that "the new deal has brought some benefit to every single industry in Utah—coal mining, metal mining, wheat raising, sugar beet growing, stock raising and all others."[314] On November 6, 1938, Thomas and Representative J. W. Robinson appealed to a mass meeting of organized labor and old age pension groups to vote the Democratic ticket "straight," adding that "only by having the same party in power as in Washington could social security and other national legislation be made truly effective in Utah."[315] At American Fork the night before the election he closed his campaign by summarizing what he called the "constructive" program of the New Deal as opposed to "destructive policies of the opposition." Harris also concentrated on Utah County, with a community reception in Provo Monday prior to the election to "welcome Harris back" to the district where he would cast his vote the next day.

On the morning of November 8, 1938, O. N. Malmquist of the *Salt Lake Tribune* predicted that nearly 200,000 would cast ballots. "Among the things the collective voice of these voters will do indirectly is indicate whether the new deal is riding a receding or rising wave in this state. . . . All during the campaign, waged unremittingly and vigorously the past month, the central issue of the new deal has been sharply drawn in the congressional contests. All for reelection—Senator Elbert D. Thomas, Representative Abe Murdock—are supporters and have made their bid for votes on the national

administration's program. The Republican opponents—Dr. Harris for the senate and Dean F. Brayton and LeRoy B. Young for congress—have, on the other hand, centered their attacks on the new deal and its handicaps." He concluded by saying that since the campaign had revolved almost exclusively around the New Deal, the vote should indicate its status with Utah voters.

On November 9, with more than two-thirds of Utah's 799 voting districts tabulated, all Democratic candidates were certain of reelection. Majorities were large but not as impressive as the numbers that Franklin Roosevelt had racked up in 1936. Elbert Thomas was projected to win by 25,000 votes. On November 10, 1938, the *Salt Lake Tribune*'s O. N. Malmquist wrote an analysis of the election under the title "Both Sides Hail Results of Election in Utah." Democrats were ecstatic over their winning numbers in all major offices by substantial majorities, retaining control of the legislature and the majority of county offices. Republicans, on the other hand, found consolation in having made substantial gains over the 1936 majorities, winning 20 percent of the seats in the state legislature, and in gaining a number of county offices.[316]

Congratulations on Thomas's victory ran the gamut. A telegram came from James Farley extended his "heartiest congratulations." Two hand-written letters were of special interest. Mrs. Lula Peterson asked him to "except" [sic] her best wishes. "I think the election went over in a big way. Piute County ticket went democratic for the first time in history."[317] On November 14 Mr. and Mrs. Norm Sargent of Panguitch wrote to congratulate him on his "glorious success," noting that "Garfield County is more Democratic than it used to be. We are sure some day to be a democratic county." Thomas, as was his lifelong habit, wrote a gracious acknowledgment, thanking

the Sargents for the "exceptional quality of work you did in my behalf during the campaign." [318]

In the *Salt Lake Times* editorial on November 11, 1938, entitled "A True Picture," note was made of the fact that although Republicans could console themselves with reduced Democratic majorities, the *Times* had reported accurately on the election and made no attempt to "scare or influence" voters. Harris, it was said, although the "pride of the Republican party," was a "good candidate" who would have made a better showing had he distanced himself from the Republican Party. Better wait for 1944, the writer maintained, and carefully observe what the economic reforms of the New Deal had accomplished. "The election proved one thing in Utah—the voters of this state cannot be blinded to the many benefits that have come to them from the New Deal and they will not turn men out of office who have played a prominent part in bringing those benefits, especially when the opposition is completely without a program and employs a campaign of destruction rather than one of construction."[319]

Returned to Washington by Utah voters, in February Thomas found himself at cross-purposes with the President he so much admired. Again, the issue was judicial appointment, albeit on a much smaller scale. In 1943 in his correspondence with Frank Jonas, he remembered that some of the electorate considered him "too much of a party man." But Jonas had pointed out Thomas had not been shy about "taking the President to task on the principle of the balance of powers." Thomas responded by pointing out that he had always been "an independent thinker" and always would be. "I defend my party and its programs. The President has been wrong on many issues. I have not always voted with him. I think my strongest statement against a stand of the President is on purely a

constitutional interpretation in the Roberts case."[320]

Floyd H. Roberts was a Virginia lawyer, state judge, and briefly a federal judge. A graduate of the University of Virginia, he had been given a recess appointment to the new second seat on the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia. In January of 1939 Roosevelt sent his nomination to the Senate. It can be argued that Roosevelt did so in order to discipline Virginia's senators Harry F. Byrd and Carter Glass because of their tepid support of New Deal programs. (As noted earlier the year was replete with such discipline.) Both Virginia Senators disapproved of the nomination, but the issue went deeper and spilled over into the veto power in federal appointments.

In this particular case Elbert Thomas and Roosevelt parted ways. On February 9 Thomas spoke in the Senate on the issue of the President's power to appoint federal judges. "There are times when real harm may be done to our constitutional scheme by thoughtless personal or loose reactions to a given constitutional practice. . . . Since the establishment of our government under the Constitution, the Senate of the United States is the only creature of government which has remained continuously in existence. . . . To attempt to coerce is fatal, to attempt to outwit is disastrous, to attempt to stand upon a right which is not based upon fact or history results only in introducing into government the confusion of an otherwise harmonious relationship especially essential to a democracy wherein the rights of all must of necessity be recognized even if they are only in the sphere of courtesy."[321] The *Chicago Tribune* reported that Elbert Thomas, "one of the most ardent New Dealers, amazed his colleagues today by accusing President Roosevelt of usurping the senate's prerogatives and marring the American constitution"—strong words indeed, but the *Tribune* had never been a fan of Roosevelt.

Ultimately the Senate rejected Roberts' nomination in a vote of seventy-two to nine.[322]

In the end and in the larger context, it had been a small thing. But by 1939, far worse issues were looming in the future. In the 1930s predator nations were on the rampage, and it became clear that the directive temper of society was unsure of how to handle the emerging barbarity in Europe and Asia within the confines of an American temperament. Cruelly but not coincidentally the Great Depression had called into question the very survivability of the American political system. The Secretary of State Cordell Hull, after examining cables from Berlin, assured the American people in 1934 that "Mistreatment of Jews in Germany may be considered officially terminated." Worried and frightened, most people were impatient with reports of Japanese misbehavior in Manchuria and China. So what if in the Japanese naval maneuvers of 1932 an American carrier had been "attacked" at Pearl Harbor in a dawn "raid" and American ships had been sunk there? It was all on paper. No one cared—except in Tokyo, where a lengthy memorandum had been filed on the exercise. By 1936, 71 percent of Americans believed the country had been hoodwinked into participation in World War I, anyway. And, after all, was the United States not protected by two oceans?[323]

Endnotes

[289] William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America 1932-1972* (Boston, Little-Brown, 1973), 139.
[290] James MacGregor Burns, *The Lion and the Fox,* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956), 271-288.
[291] Ibid.
[292] "We Will Stand Firm," *San Diego Union*, Dec. 24, 1936, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 1, 6.
[293] *Congressional Record,* Feb. 16, 1937, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, Scrapbook 2, no p.
[294] Burns, *The Lion and the Fox,* 294.
[295] Ibid., 301.
[296] *Salt Lake Telegram*, Feb. 22, 1937, no p.,Thomas MSS 129, Box 229.
[297] *Chicago Times,* March 30, 1937, no p., Thomas MSS 129, Box 229.
[298] Burns, *The Lion and the Fox,* 309.
[299] Ibid., 319.
[300] Ernest L. Wilkinson, *BYU: The First Hundred Years* (Provo: BYU Press, 1975), 240.
[301] O. M. Malmquist, *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 14, 1938, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229, 1.
[302] Address to Junior Democrats, Oct. 7, 1938, Thomas MSS 129, Box 230, Scrapbook 2, 14.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Letter from anonymous NYA worker to State Democratic Headquarters, Oct. 20, 1938, Thomas MSS 129, Box 230.
[305] Gordon Hyde to Franklin Harris, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229.
[306] "Thomas True Son of Utah From Hardy Mormon Stock," *Labor*, Oct. 25, 1938, Thomas MSS 129, Box 229.
[307] Campaign address, no location, date, Thomas MSS 129, Box 129.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Campaign address, no location, date, Thomas MSS 129, Box 22.
[310] Letter from supporters, response from Thomas, Thomas MSS 129, Box 129.
[311] "The Good Doctor Harris Gets a Kickback," *Salt Lake Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1938, Thomas MSS 129, Box 22.
[312] Campaign flyer, Thomas MSS 129, Box 22.
[313] "Vote the Straight Democratic Ticket," *Piute County,* Nov. 4, 1938, 1, Thomas MSS 129, Box 22.
[314] Thomas MSS 129, Box 230, 185.
[315] Malmquist, *Salt Lake Tribune,* Nov. 10, 1938, no p., Thomas MSS 129, Box 230.
[316] "Both Sides Hail Result of Election in Utah," *Salt Lake Tribune,* Nov. 10, 1938, no p., Thomas MSS 129, Box 230. In the final count, Elbert Thomas received 103,079 votes to Harris's 80,538.
[317]Letter from Mrs. Lula Peterson to Thomas, Thomas MSS 129, Box 4.
[318] Letter from Mr and Mrs. Norm Sargent to Thomas, response from Thomas, Thomas MSS 129, Box 4.
[319] "A True Picture," *Salt Lake Times*, Nov. 11, 1938, Thomas MSS 129, box 230, 31.
[320] Elbert Thomas to Frank Jonas, Sept. 13, 1943, Thomas MSS 129, Box 2, 1.
[321] *Congressional Record, New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1939, Thomas MSS 129, Box 3.

[322] *Chicago Tribune,* Feb. 9, 1939, Thomas MSS 129, Box 231, 11-12.
[323] Manchester, *Glory and the Dream*, 69.

CHAPTER 7

TO TREAT THE IMPORTANT

When Governor Martin Glynn of New York nominated Woodrow Wilson for a second term at the Democratic National Convention in the summer of 1916, he praised the president for keeping the United States out of war. Encouraged by his electoral triumph in the fall, Wilson redoubled his quest for peace, sending on December 16, 1916, notes to the belligerent governments requesting their terms. Preparing the United States for what he believed would be a new era of international relations, he outlined his plans for the future before the Senate, reaffirming his commitment to a League of Nations. But his oratory came too late. Gambling on the collapse of Russia in the east, Germany had decided to throw all it had at Britain and France. Consequently the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. With the fall of the three-hundred-year-old Romanov dynasty, considered by most Americans to be authoritarian, oppressive, and brutal (not to mention decidedly "un-democratic"), Wilson had the rationale to justify American intervention, and thus the United States embarked on a grand experiment to reshape the world.

The American willingness to use force on a global scale is a legacy of World War I, but war as a romantic notion was its most significant casualty. We had gone "over there" to "make the world safe for democracy," but in the memories of the "Doughboys" the reality was a nightmarish terrain of death on which a monster of technology raged.

Modern weaponry was no respecter of grace or youth or nationality. It killed without distinction, consuming an entire generation of Europe's youth, 116,000 Americans, and ultimately drove American culture into more selfish pursuits, tawdry and amoral—and a grim determination to collaborate no more in fratricidal European quarrels and to guard steadfastly and jealously its own isolation.[324]

Despite what some interpreted as ominous developments—Hitler had been made Chancellor of Germany in January of 1933, and, following its invasion of Manchuria, Japan continued to meddle in China with clearly imperialist intentions—Americans were preoccupied with their own set of disasters. Elbert Thomas, very recently elected to the Senate, dismissed war fears as "silly." Having written numerous works on the Orient, not to mention having spent several years there, his opinion was respected. "There is no cause for a war between the Soviets and the island empire," he told reporters. "Those two nations arrived at a complete understanding in 1905 and they have respected each other's rights ever since."[325]

Others disagreed. Upton Close (B. Josef Washington Hall), former missionary, spy in Germany and Japan in World War I, radio personality since 1924, persistent critic of President Roosevelt, antisemitic and isolationist (his radio contract would be cancelled because of pressure from the American-Jewish community), squared off against Thomas, claiming that his "diagnosis of the Japanese situation is that it is made on the basis of a senator on his cubicle, while some of the rest of us have been in Japan and have seen things as they are." [326] Thomas laughed; "There is less reason at any time for a war with Japan . . . some of the rest of us have been in Japan," himself, he said, included. The following year he spoke on "the Probability of War." No European (he had recently

returned from ten weeks there), leader or follower, wanted it. Memories of the carnage of the last war were yet vivid. He condemned Hitler calling his "anti-Jewish crusade" wrong, as was the boycott of Jewish businesses, but although Hitler himself, he seemed to imply, may have "spiritualized the nation" and unified it through "ecstasy and exhaltation," in the end he would be brought down by his egomania and "self-intoxication."[327]

In his next speech, given at the War College on January 3, 1935, he turned to Japan. "I think it goes without saying that I am frightened," he began. "Not quite as frightened as when I face a freshman class, because those fellows know everything. . . . As a political theorist, I am a pluralist, but only in the sense of my own definition of what constitutes a pluralist," but by *pluralist* he meant *many-faceted.* Mussolini, he said was "multiplex," no individual, "many dictators," not one. But the bulk of the address was devoted to the emergence of modern Japan. He cautioned against the oversimplification of Japan as having just emerged from its feudalistic past, and described it as rather a study in "planned nationality," having nearly eradicated illiteracy, creating the most skilled labor force in the world, and breaking down party government in much the same way that it was breaking down in Europe. Nevertheless, his tone was optimistic ("there is nothing to be pessimistic about at the present time"), concluding that "all in all there has been an evolution of a better understanding . . . ."[328]

He refused to give up on peace. In an NBC broadcast the following September he continued to believe in "extremely significant and hopeful signs."[329] In February he condemned the Exclusion Act as "ruthless and foolish" and encouraged a ten- thousand strong student exchange to improve understanding.[330] For the next two years he

continued the theme of peace as possible, and asserted on November 19, 1935, that he did not believe "there would be a major war comparable with 1914." [331] (*Ogden Standard Examiner,* November 19, 1935.) On neutrality (to be dealt with following) he cautioned Americans traveling on the seas over the "traffic of war . . . you do it at your own risk" and admonished Americans who "deliberately flout the government neutrality policy by trading with either Ethiopia or Italy." [332] The previous year he had spent time in Europe, studied conditions there, met Rudolf Hess and was convinced that the Nazis were preparing to embark on a quest for world domination. He cautioned the Jews of Europe that the government imposed boycott was but a warning. "Race, economic or religious prejudice," he said in a speech given at Kingsbury Hall, "can never permit the building of a strong nation anywhere." He pointedly stated that Hitler was ill-educated and "ludicrously crude" in his knowledge of Jewish history in or out of Germany.

In February of 1936 Thomas continued to maintain that speculation about war with Japan was "silly" and without foundation. Reminding readers that Japanese naval and ground troop strength was nothing new, and dated back to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, he called the military class "greatly respected" but "no more belligerent by nature than the military class of any other nation"—words he most assuredly lived to regret. Given Thomas's scholarly and ethical nature and his generally unfailing good sense and formidable analytical skills, it is difficult to explain how he could have been tolerant of ideas and behaviors so contrary to his own.

He had indeed spent years in Japan, immersing himself in the society and was consistently tolerant of ideas and behaviors that did not agree with his, but his reluctance (or inability) to assess the rising of a Japan in the 1930s that was truly aggressive, could

be attributed to two things. First, he knew and loved the Japanese people, his naming of his eldest daughter Chiyo ("a thousand years of blessings") a validation of his deep feelings for the people and their culture. Secondly, as far as the Japanese were concerned, he may have envisioned a roseate future based on the hospitable people with whom he had lived and worked and had no eye on the sky for a Japanese imperialistic sun that was on the rise. In any case, he continued to champion peace and amicability. In the *Japanese-American Courier* in January of 1937 he reiterated his belief that although the outlook was bleak for many, he saw "nothing to be discouraged over, for throughout the history of the world conditions have been, as it were, in a state of flux."[333] In 1943, when questioned by Frank Jonas, he candidly explained his beliefs about the neutrality legislation of 1935, 1936, and 1937. "[I thought these were] unwise," he wrote. "In 1935 I attempted to modify the resolution and failed. In 1936 it was my resolution that was adopted, and I am the author of the provision about South America. In 1937 again you will remember that my amendments were rejected. I had supported all acts as they came from the committee as committee recommended acts and they had the Administration's approval. This happens very often and when you lose your own individual point of view you nevertheless sustain what is done by your group."[334]

Still, by 1938 the world situation had become increasingly worrisome. Speaking on the rise of fascism in Europe, Thomas said that "The thing that has most characterized the American psychology during the troubled years since the last great world upheaval is a smug certainty that what is now happening to the rest of the world cannot possibly happen here . . . it is recognized that in other countries events are rapidly approaching a crisis that threatens the destruction of the democratic nations . . . yet it is assumed that

there is something in our national character or in our social and economic system, or both, that renders us immune from the dangers that threaten the ruin of the rest of the world."[335]

Speaking in a decidedly sterner tone, he warned Americans that the longer they continue to ignore what is happening in the world around them, "the more certain it will be that we shall meet the same fate that has overtaken the nations of the old world which have sacrificed their liberties in exchange for a security that would have in hundred-fold greater measure been theirs if they had been able to adjust their affairs according to democratic principles before it was too late."[336] In an address delivered on KUTA on October 14, 1939, he went further. "War is about to begin in Europe we are told. If we stay out, what about economic problems?" In December General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, took American education—and by logical extension, Elbert Thomas—to task by demanding that historians take the "sugar-coating" off American history textbooks and report the nation's shortcomings honestly. Speaking to the American Historical Association and the American Military Institute, Marshall charged that "inadequate teaching" of American history had produced "costly errors, payable in men's lives and wasted dollars when war came." Textbooks, he maintained, had presented glamorized portrayals of American armies "sweeping to victory with supreme flawlessness." Thomas was irate. Rising to his feet, he claimed that if there were inadequacies, they were naval and military ones. "We should look to the service to see that military history is properly taught. The challenge, General Marshall, is therefore thrown back at you." (In May of the following year he addressed the Annual Meeting of the American Society of International Law in which he compared the revolutionary

movements in China, India, Russia and Germany, pointing out that these were relatively new phenomena, whereas war was not. But he did not belittle the reality of force and forcefully argued that diplomatic agencies of government "should so act that the agencies of the Army and the Navy need not be called on.")[337] Although the exchange with Marshall was trivial, it mirrored a growing neurosis among the American people regarding events abroad. Their worst fears would be confirmed sooner than they thought.

Roosevelt's war policy was in a stall. His "quarantine" speech in Chicago had rendered even Secretary Hull silent, although responses from the public at large were mixed. In reality the President had recommended only sanctions as economic punishment. At dinner on December 6, 1941, Roosevelt commented that the Japanese would strike at their own convenience. Harry Hopkins remarked that it was regrettable that the United States could not deliver the first blow; Roosevelt responded by essentially saying it was not our style. The following day around lunchtime in Washington he received the news that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. Roosevelt's war policy no longer seemed ambiguous. For months he had become increasingly troubled by the thuggish behavior of Fascists and deeply skeptical of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. But after December 7, it became moot. Refusing to lay blame, he recognized that war was now an American reality behind which all Americans must unify.[338]

There was no ambiguity in Elbert Thomas's mind. Frank Jonas remarked that his "training in Japanese [made] him a marked man in the United States at the outbreak of the war."[339] He immediately went to work using his knowledge of the Far East to contribute to what he felt must be total victory. Anything less was unthinkable. Almost immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor he began to broadcast to the Japanese

people in their own language the ultimate hopelessness of their cause. In an article written early in 1942 he remembered his missionary years in Japan where his "course of study was through colloquial contact with real people. . . There were no prohibited areas. As I became somewhat proficient in the conversational vocabulary, I ventured out entirely on my own, among the common people—factory workers, farmers, artisans, and the professional classes." The Japan with which America was now at war was being driven by an intensive nationalistic sentiment and a fanciful determination to make Japan the greatest country in the world. ". . .I am greatly disturbed by the American tendency to underestimate the Japanese, to think of them as an inferior race—ignorant, superstitious, and 'semicivilized.'" [340]

Regrettably many Americans saw the Japanese as not only inferior and "semicivilized" but disloyal and dangerous as well. Following a determined campaign by Earl Warren, Attorney General of California, and other groups, Roosevelt was persuaded to sign Executive Order 9066 which created "exclusion zones" and the removal of all people of Japanese ancestry, approximately 110,000, from the Pacific coast (all of California, parts of Oregon, Washington and Arizona) to internment camps further inland. Sixty-two percent of those interned were American citizens.[341] The application was appallingly unequal. In Hawaii, for example, where residents of Japanese ancestry comprised 33 percent of the population and numbered 150,000, only twelve to eighteen hundred were imprisoned. In the desert fifteen miles west of Delta, Utah, one such camp was constructed over 19,800 acres (four times the size of Manzanar in California). Originally called the Central Utah Relocation Center, the name was discarded since the acronym sounded unsettlingly like "curse." Since the local citizenry did not want the

camp named for their city (Governor Maw objected strenuously to its construction at all on the grounds that Utahns would be endangered), it became known as Topaz Mountain. Nine thousand internees would be relocated there; by war's end, 130 had died of natural causes, one by gunfire.[342] The camp opened on September 11, 1942, and closed on October 31, 1945. Although this writer could find no reference to Topaz in the Thomas papers, it seems logical to speculate that, given his devotion to civil liberties and his strong connection to the Japanese people, the Senator found the policy distressingly contradictory of American principles that guaranteed legal justice and protection of the equality of all its citizens.

He criticized those who saw the Japanese army as subhuman, when in reality, he said, they are tough and capable, with impressive leadership. In any discussion of the situation, he believed, he felt that he was obligated to emphasize that the quickest way to victory was the bombing of her industrial centers. "Japan's greatest weakness is that these are concentrated in a comparatively small area, easily identifiable from the air."[343]

Over the months that followed, virtually until war's end, he pounded home the idea that Japan would only understand this destructive military force. Pointing out that Italy had "bogged down" in the war and Hitler had suffered disastrous defeats in Russia and North Africa, they could count on no help from the other Axis powers. In March of 1942 he stated in *American Magazine* that the war in the Pacific needed a "hypodermic" in the form of a thousand bombs dropped on the munitions factories of Tokyo and Osaka and that the lives of 50,000 American soldiers and sailors would thus be spared.[344]

He received responses to his efforts from many different parts of the country—some practical and eloquent, others predictably ignorant and crude. I. A. Metz of

Tallahassee, Florida, wrote to tell him he was "100% right. We should start bombing those dirty japs [sic] NOW!" His article in the *American* also received high marks. Sent to leading clergymen throughout the country (Dr. William L. Stidger of the Boston School of Theology had written a special introduction), it was characterized as "realistic, honest and sane and as truly Christian as any orthodox clergyman could write" (perhaps a reference to his Mormonism and the general disdain in mainstream churches regarding the lay clergy of the LDS church). Hamilton F. Gronen, owner of Gronen Daffodil Gardens in Puyallup, Washington, wrote to express his approval, but as in many other cases, to chastise the government for moving too slowly. The Senator graciously and diplomatically responded, as per usual, to Mr. Gronen, and informed him that "at this very minute our air forces may be over Japan continuing the drive which they started." [345]

He viewed, he said, the Pacific Theater of Operations as the "real war" in an article published in the *Los Angeles Examiner* in December of 1942. Speaking to members of the Democratic Luncheon at the Rosslyn Hotel, he said, "Hitler may be considered our most powerful enemy, but let us not lose sight of the fact that the outcome of this conflict affects all the millions of people in lands ringing the Pacific."[346] In the *Baltimore Sun* on January 14, 1943, he expressed his view that "Japan is a student nation that went 'crazy'". . . . He blamed the Japanese relationship with Germany and Italy for "putting false conceptions of what foreigners value" and for planting the seeds of extremist nationalism. European members of the Axis were not to be spared either. In the *Salt Lake Tribune* on Sept. 11, 1941, he stated that the German armies would feel the might of Allied airpower first in supplies, second in public morale. "The arms of Hitler are in Russia, his stomach and heart are in Germany. Let the army armadas blast the heart

and stomach and the arms are paralyzed." The implication was what he had accused others of doing—as if the Japanese were incapable of thinking for themselves, a typically occidental notion of Oriental inferiority. But one cannot help but wonder how he felt about the people with whom he had lived and for whom he felt such affection and respect being under the threat of death from American bombers in Japanese skies.

As the chairman of the Military Affairs Committee (see appendices) he also worked closely with the chiefs of staff who reported directly to the President. Near the end of the war after victory in the European Theater of Operations, he had corresponded with Admiral William Leahy and had offered his opinions on how to bring about the final victory in a proposal as to how the Japanese people should be convinced of the hopelessness of their cause and his appeal that no further blood be shed. "It is better to live with honor for your emperor than it is to die and be eternally disgraced for having given your life in an unworthy cause. Think of your father, your mother, and your children"—an obvious appeal to the tradition of filial piety. "Surrender with honor," the proposed speech read, "and start Japan on her new mission of cooperation in a world of peace." Leahy responded by saying that he was in complete agreement and would try any method to spare American life. [347] In August Elbert Thomas wrote to Dr. Harry E. Wildes at the Office of War Information, reiterating his belief that in the long run psychological warfare would be the most effective method of uniting the Japanese people in surrender.[348] The question, of course, became moot with the dropping of the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima one day before Russia was to enter the war against Japan, resulting in the United States being in sole charge of the occupation and postwar reorganization of Japan.

Japan's decision to surrender unconditionally was in reality made by the dawn of the atomic age, and Thomas had known about the development of a super weapon as chairman of the Military Affairs Committee. Prior to his death he recalled that "I could never rid myself of the idea that ultimate victory can come only through a change in men's hearts and ideas. More with that zeal than the idea to destroy, I supported the experimentation which resulted in the atomic bomb." He also credited Hirohito's crucial role in acquiescence to Allied ultimatums in bringing about the orderly surrender of the Japanese empire. But he also issued a *caveat*: the bomb will not keep the peace unless the world resigns itself to the need for the rule of law.

Despite his work on various war-related committees, much of his time was spent in dealing with individual cases of very human concerns, including prisoners of war, the treatment of the Nisei, conscientious objectors, and the fate of the Jews of Europe. Undoubtedly his work on the LaFollette committee and as chairman of the Labor and Education Committee had helped make him a nationally-known political figure, but more significantly perhaps he had developed a reputation for fairness and what the public could see as his genuine innate decency and humanitarianism. So-called "ordinary" people intuitively felt that he cared about their lives because he could listen. The volume of mail he received from people living in all parts of the country is unusually high. And listen he did, but it did not stop there.

On February 7, 1944, Thomas addressed the Senate on the topic of prisoners of war, both military and civilian, being held by the Japanese. It was the culmination of over three years of dealing with cases, both individual and organizational, related to the fate of Americans in the Japanese-held territories of the Pacific. "Another sordid chapter was

added to the story of Pearl Harbor," he said, "during the past week when the reports of Japanese atrocities against American prisoners of war were made known to the public." He continued by saying that Americans had been enduring the same horrors that had been perpetrated on countries occupied by Japan. The United States government, he pointed out, had, from the outset, observed the Geneva Prisoners of War Convention to insure humane treatment for American nationals held by the Japanese. The problems encountered in dealing with Japanese officials, however, had been nearly insurmountable. The Japanese had not been signatories to the Geneva Convention of 1929 and felt no obligation, moral or otherwise, to adhere to it. Additionally the code of *bushido* dictated that surrender was cowardice, and accounts for the lopsided numbers when one studies the statistics relative to American and Japanese prisoners of war. Japan differentiated between prisoners in the Philippines and those held on the Japanese mainland. Other difficulties had arisen in efforts to get relief supplies—food, clothing, and medicine—to both military and civilian internees. The only way to get through to the Japanese was through the neutral Swiss. At the time of the address, Secretary Cordell Hull had received a total of eighty-nine protests, which resulted in an eighteen-part indictment of Japanese barbarity toward its prisoners. "From the beginning our primary consideration has been for the lives and welfare of [our] men," Thomas said, and to stop these atrocities. Regardless of the outrage felt at home, American POWs were in no position to be immediately rescued. That offered small comfort, but he had been dealing with the families of those in enemy hands since the beginning of the war. [349]

Throughout the country organizations had been formed to address the plight of prisoners of the Japanese. In May of 1943 the Philippine Society of California, men

formerly residents of those islands, wrote to Secretary Hull. The resolution they passed directed the President and Secretary of State to renew their efforts to bring about a prisoner exchange. Word had leaked out as to precisely how deplorable conditions were, the British issuing a joint statement from their Foreign, War, and Colonial offices accusing the Japanese of failure to notify the British government as to the identities of those being held. The British estimated that over one hundred thousand of their personnel were in captivity. That same day, it was reported that the mortality rate in Japanese camps was ninety-six per one thousand, whereas prisoners held at Fort Missoula, Montana, and Fort Lincoln, North Dakota, only four deaths from the average of 1,158 Japanese and Italian POWs had occured. Americans were, needless to say, equally concerned, and in the summer of 1943 Elbert Thomas was appointed chairman of a subcommittee of the Military Affairs Committee to study the situation and respond to requests for information from citizens regarding their family members. He began a correspondence with Secretary of War Henry Stimson.[350]

Several organizations had been established throughout the United States as support groups for worried family members, one of the most active and visible being the Bataan Relief Organization. Some of the demands that were made by these groups were unrealistic, given the vast areas in the Pacific controlled by the Japanese, but the requests were born out of desperation. Thomas immediately established contact with the State Department. Secretary Hull was sympathetic but noted in a letter to Thomas in August the difficulty encountered when trying to deal with the Japanese who by that point "[had] not agreed even in principle to exchange Americans from the Philippines," but added that State would not relax its efforts to bring Japan to the table. Breckinridge Long, Assistant

Secretary, was sympathetic and cooperative and agreed to meet with Thomas and the subcommittee in October of 1943. Thomas also enlisted the aid of Secretary of War Henry Stimson to help gather information and help relieve the "agitation . . . among the families in the West whose members have been held . . . and were not members of the armed forces when they were captured."[351]

Some groups transferred their resentments and hatred of Japan to Japanese Americans. In one correspondence from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a resolution contended that "many Japanese who were born and educated in this country, have been found in the ranks of the Japanese Armed Forces fighting against the country in which they were born and reared, which demonstrates the devotion of Japanese to the Emperor of Japan above everything else." No evidence whatever exists that would prove this to be true, but the sentiment, largely racist, was the same as war hysteria that put over 100,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps. Thomas's response was characteristically gracious but he pointed out that the responsibility for alleged atrocities lay with the "militaristic class" whom he had always "regarded with mistrust." [352]

Most poignant, however, were the letters he received from individual family members pleading for help in learning the whereabouts of loved ones: a father from Chicago whose son had been captured on Bataan. A woman from Mississippi who had received no word as to the fate of twelve of her relatives, including her son and grandchildren who had been civilians working in the Philippines and taken in December of 1941. An executive of the Lykes Brothers Steamship Company searching for his brother and his wife. A father from Salt Lake City whose army officer son had been a

prisoner since April of 1942. (Thomas responded to the latter with a four-page letter explaining the "insurmountable difficulties" of dealing with the Japanese government. "I deeply regret," he wrote, "that I cannot give you some hope that your son might be exchanged," but promised his active and continued interest.) The wife of a physician on a ship bombed in Manila Bay on December 10, 1941. A marginally literate mother of an only child "heartsick from worry." Every inquiry was answered individually and compassionately. The tragic reality, however, was that rescue would have to entail boots on ground—and that would not happen until 1944 and 1945.

It goes without saying that in all wars certain groups, for whatever reasons, justified or not, suffer collateral damage. During the World War II era messages about race were strangely ambiguous when one considers how Nazi racial policies were roundly condemned in an American society that had from the outset found it difficult, to say the least, to reconcile racial differences and racial equality—it was, in Gunnar Myrdal's phrase, *An American Dilemma.* The American South had jealously guarded its own apartheid in the statutory form of Jim Crow laws, and all racial groups could lay claim to having endured discrimination on some level or another. In the war with Japan people of Japanese descent faced a unique situation. War hysteria undoubtedly was the foundation of American policy regarding Japanese Americans after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which directed the relocation and internment of first and second generation Americans living in close proximity to the West Coast—Issei and Nisei—to inland camps.[353] The morning after Pearl Harbor, California governor and attorney general Earl Warren fired civil service employees of Japanese descent, revoked professional licenses, in some cases banned them from doing business or having access to

their own fishing boats. (Ironically, Earl Warren would be appointed Chief Justice by Eisenhower and preside over the landmark *Brown* v. *Board of Education* case in 1954, which was the beginning of the end for public segregation. It was Warren who was convinced that the decision must be unanimous and worked without letup to achieve it.) His response to the lack of domestic espionage was proof that the Japanese were devious and duplicit, especially if they were American-born since they knew the "system". A West Coast syndicated columnist wrote, "Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry, and dead up against it." Westbrook Pegler, in his typically delicate fashion, said "to hell with *habeas corpus* until the danger is over." Insurance policies and milk deliveries were cancelled. In many cases Japanese Americans could not buy groceries, their funds were frozen, and their checks were not honored. Eight thousand went inland as the infection of racism spread, but officials in Nevada, Idaho, Arkansas, and Kansas made it clear they were not welcome. Chase Clark of Idaho said "Japs live like rats, breed like rats, and act like rats." To his discredit, Roosevelt passed the buck to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy. Attorney General Francis Biddle refused to get on the bandwagon. Urging caution, he called the evacuations "needless," but later said he felt as low man on the totem pole "disinclined to insist on my view to an elder statesman."[354]

Because of his background both as a missionary in Japan and the co-chair of the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee, Elbert Thomas was the logical choice of those who sought a redress of this grievance. In terms of policy, the regrettable reality was that there was little he could do. But in the cases of individuals he had more leverage and was not reluctant to use it. The first assistance he was able to provide, however, was not to Japanese Americans but to an Italian American, Mrs. Ruby Scalzo. Married in 1919, Mr.

Scalzo had served in the United States army and was a naturalized citizen who had been investigated by the local Alien Board in Carbon County. Mrs. Scalzo had been surprised and hurt by the prejudiced attitudes of her neighbors. Her husband (whose first name is not mentioned) had been a respected businessman in Carbon, but the question of the legitimacy of his citizenship, undoubtedly a result of the emotions of war, had become troublesome. Although he had passed the age of enlisting in the armed forces, he wanted, his wife wrote, to render some sort of service in the war effort. Thomas responded with the suggestion that Mr. Scalzo contact the director of the Army Specialist Corps and noted that he had informed the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization of his interest in the case. [355]

As early as January of 1934, he had been encouraged to "begin an active campaign for the improvement of our relations with Japan" in a letter from Harvard Law (the signature is illegible.) On July 25, 1942 he received a request for help from Mrs. Lucy Sato and her friends, the Shiogi family. Judging from the tone of the letter, these were people with whom the Thomases had been acquainted in the past. Her husband, Mrs. Sato stated, had applied for a position as a Japanese translator for the cross-cultural survey being conducted at Yale. Such a position would have allowed him to leave the internment center. Additionally, it would afford the opportunity to pursue his graduate work in chemistry. He received an additional letter from Mr. Shiogi's younger brother. "It looks as if every time I write you I am asking for some sort of favor. You have been extra kind in doing all that you have done for us and I wish to thank you very, very much." Thomas responded with a letter on behalf of Mr. Shiogi, whose family he had known for a number of years, he said, and assured the recipient that "I have always felt

that members of this family were loyal American citizens." How the situation was eventually resolved is not shown, but correspondence continued over the next few months, during which Thomas wrote several letters of recommendation.[356]

He became involved in the Gordon Kiyoshi Hirabayashi case when he received a letter from the Plymouth Congregational Church in Oakland, California. Hirabayashi had sued the United States Government on the basis of violation of his civil rights. The court had upheld the incarceration of Japanese Americans, but one judge dissented. It was this dissent that the Plymouth Church sent to Thomas, asking his help in reversing what it considered a travesty of justice. Thomas responded to Reverend Robert Inglis by saying, "I hope the time is soon coming when persons will be judged by their acts and not their blood." [357]

Not all the correspondence he received was so enlightened. On July 3, 1943, a letter he received in reference to a short article that appeared (dateline July 3, 1943, Washington) was nothing less than vicious. Mike M. Masaoka, National Secretary and Field Executive of the Japanese American Citizens League, had testified before the Dies subcommittee on un-American activities asking that "more Japanese American citizens should be released from relocation centers after they have been checked by the FBI." Masaoka had been born in Fresno and graduated from the University of Utah in 1937. He had been inducted into the Army on June 3, 1943. The article aroused the fury of an Army wife in an unsigned letter on July 3, 1943, in which she claimed she had been in the Veterans' Hospital and seen men with "ten fingers cut off and eyes poked out" by the Japanese. "I am a good American citizen [with a husband who is a colonel overseas];" she wanted the "dirty yellow rats" punished. The National Association of Master

Plumbers submitted a resolution to the 78th Congress demanding that Japanese Americans be retained in the relocation centers in which they had been placed and not be allowed back to the Pacific Coast areas from which they had come "until the Japanese aggressor enemy is crushed and surrenders unconditionally." Thomas wrote a brief response in which he acknowledged receiving the resolution and diplomatically concluded with "I appreciate very much having the benefit of your views."[358]

One particularly disturbing and bizarre racist diatribe came from a Joseph Freeling in New York City. "Because of the detrimental psychological effects caused by the Japs, I honestly believe that as long as the war lasts, regardless whether or not they (the Japs) win battles, there is a great danger of an uprising on the part of most of the dark-skinned races, who are in the very great majority throughout the world." This was followed by Freeling's "method as a means, aside from military actions to bring the war to a close sooner and eliminate the danger mentioned." He proposed the formation of an international "governmental corporation, with each nation receiving in shares an equivalent to its net worth," offering shares to people in Axis countries, with the exception of Japan (read *white*). Since the "Japs" believed in their racial superiority, they would not be interested in participating and "will fight to the last man." The other Axis countries would of necessity have to agree to "overthrow their intolerable leaders," making the "defeat of the Japs much easier." He oddly concluded that "The recent race riots in Detroit and incidents at army camps makes me believe that we have here an emergency." Thomas's Secretary Paul Badger acknowledged receipt of the "suggestion" and wrote that Thomas realized the Japanese would "fight to the last man and I am sure that he has been interested in the suggestions which you have made."[359]

He was clearly more involved in the affairs of groups like the Japanese American Citizens League and individuals like Teiko Ishida, for whom Thomas had arranged an appointment with General Lewis B. Hershey of the Selective Service Board. Japanese Americans who wished to serve in the armed forces had been classified 4C, which translated into alien or dual national. Miss Ishida had written to Thomas on December 11, 1943, asking that "Americans of Japanese descent [be reinstated] on a free and equal basis as all other Americans for service in the regular forces." He would, he replied, "be watching for any attempts in Congress to introduce or pass un-American legislation aimed specifically at loyal Japanese in the country or Japanese Americans, or generally all minority groups, with the object of curtailing or destroying our civil rights." She had been brought to Thomas's attention by Mike Masaoka, who by November of 1943 was serving as an infantryman in the prestigious 442nd Infantry ("Go for Broke"), which was comprised of Japanese American enlisted men under the command of Caucasian officers. The 442nd made its bones in Italy in May of 1944. Fourteen thousand Japanese Americans served in this unit; 21 received the Congressional Medal of Honor. It became the most decorated unit of the war. On July 5, 1944, Thomas received a telegram from Castle H. Murphy, Latter Day Saint Mission President in Honolulu, informing him of the death in combat of Lieutenant Kenneth Teruya in Italy. Thomas replied that Teruya's "sacrifice for his country proves the truth of the American Constitutional principle that a person born in the United States is a citizen of the United States."[360]

The war, intentionally or not, had exposed some major hypocrisies in American society, as noted above. Interestingly, the status of conscientious objectors in this most military of military episodes in American history, was less controversial and looked upon

with greater understanding and compassion. In October of 1942 the House of Delegates of the American Hospital Association presented a resolution noting that approximately 5,000 conscientious objectors had registered in the United States and requested Selective Service Director Hershey assign conscientious objectors "to such hospitals to work as attendants, helpers, etc., in any department that such help will be needed." Major Robert Bier had been sent out on an inspection trip to visit the Farnhurst State Hospital for the Insane near Wilmington, Delaware, where he was escorted by a Dr. Tarumianz who "appeared kindly and understanding" to his patients. He noted that there had been serious objections raised to the use of Conscientious Objectors (CO) by organizations such as the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the labor organizations and even the medical profession and his own Board of Trustees.[361]

Twenty-five conscientious objectors had been assigned to Farnhurst ten days earlier and even in this short time Dr. Tarumianz was enthusiastic about their work and "more than pleased to have them." Major Bier was highly impressed with the surroundings and the quality of food and therapy. He concluded by recommending the use of COs since they could fill "a tremendous need and a benefit to the hospital, the assignee and the church board and to Selective Service." A copy of his report went to General Hershey. [362]

A report published by the National Service Board for Religious Objectors, Washington, D. C., enumerated the reasons and benefits for the use of conscientious objectors in such capacities. Such programs had been instituted in nine states, and excerpts from the report of Robert S. Blanc, Jr., of C. P. S. Camp No. 32 were included. Providing an overview of the duties and responsibilities of the workers, he concluded that

two things ought to be stressed to one considering working in a hospital unit; he should realize that in all likelihood he would have to deal with patients "revolting and disgusting," but that he should also be aware of the "deep satisfaction in ministering to the needs of men as needy and miserable as they are, and seeing the improvement in them as the result of your work." Duties, conditions, and public relations were also discussed, but more significantly, perhaps, the "national importance of such work."[363]

At this point advocates of the program appealed to Elbert Thomas. Senate Bill 315 had been referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and a letter from the Seventh Day Adventist War Service Commission requested his support on January 25, 1943. In February the House had not approved the bill (the Senate had) and the National Service Board for Religious Objectors on February 5 asked for help. Thomas responded by saying that in previous years Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado had handled the legislation, but if he does not "care to do it again this year I shall be happy to do it." [364]

Undoubtedly the most well-known conscientious objector in the United States was actor Lew Ayres. In a *New York Times* editorial published in April of 1942, the writer pointed out that there were "Those who tempted to throw stones at Lew Ayres would do better to ask themselves what their own faith is, and with how much forgetfulness of self of the vast majority of people in this country is that no sacrifice is too great it if will help beat down the Nazi abomination. We think that the men whose lives and deaths have testified most eloquently to this faith are the ones who would come closest to understanding Lew Ayres, though disagreeing with him to the last syllable." The editorial was part of a four-page pamphlet signed by no fewer than fourteen prominent Americans who upheld Ayres' right to choose not to kill his fellow man.

Attorney General Francis A. Biddle called freedom of conscience "a foundation stone of our democracy," going on to say that we "must respect the attitude of those persons who honestly and sincerely, on conscientious grounds based on religious training and belief, object to participation in war." Senator Robert A. Taft wrote that "the sincerity of these groups should be recognized." Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia "wholeheartedly [agreed] that those persons who, for religious convictions, feel that they may not serve in the armed forces of our country . . ." should be allowed this alternative means of service. Other supporters were Philip Murray, C. I. O. President, California Congressman Jerry Voorhis, Eleanor Roosevelt, who wrote "The basic thing is that individuals should want peace, should care about other human beings all over the world regardless of race, creed, or color"—and Elbert Thomas. "There are so many ways to serve our country that America has a definite place for the honest conscientious objector. Even if this were not the case, one of the great values in American life would be lost if we did not make a place."[365]

So—after Kursk and Stalingrad and the deaths of untold millions of Russians and D-Day, the Battle of the Bulge and Anzio, singularly directed determination and miracles of production, the incalculable sacrifice of the Allied people, including Americans, whose frontier sense of justice dictated that the guilty should be punished, the Allies ended Hitler's Third Reich which he had predicted would last a thousand years. The war was far from over—the most vicious combat was yet to come in the Pacific. From the Aegean to the North Sea, Nazi tyranny had created hunger and disorder, gutted the industrial base, cities had been looted and bombed, the European rail grid shattered. But as Allied troops pushed deeper into Germany and Central Europe, they discovered, in Deborah Lipstadt's phrase, a horror that was "beyond belief." What they saw and experienced would initiate

an historical debate about the nature of man, humanity, and the meaning of civilization that could last for centuries. On the witness stand at Nuremberg, Hans Frank, Nazi Governor General of Poland, uttered these words: “A thousand years will pass and still Germany’s guilt will not have been erased.”

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 8

PEACE IN THE WORLD

"During the 1930s and 1940s America could have saved thousands and maybe even hundreds of thousands of Jews but did not do so," Deborah Lipstadt writes in *Beyond Belief.* Scholars debate, she points out, when Hitler decided on a program of annihilation. Lucy Dawidowicz and others have argued that it was something he planned long before he was made Chancellor. Yehuda Bauer believes that annihilation was not decided upon until other options—such as the Madagascar plan and others—were not deemed feasible. The meaning of the word is also debated. One group contends that it meant a death sentence for all Jews as early as 1933. Another argument concerned the meaning of the word "extermination" when used by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. One group believes that as early as 1933 it meant physical annihilation. A similar interpretation of the term "annihilation" and "wiped out" was applied in an article entitled "The Annihilation of German Jewry" by a correspondent for the British journal *The Spectator* in Berlin.

Interpretations aside, it had become clear after Hitler was made Chancellor and the Nazis turned Germany in into a one party state, they were deeply committed to the anti-Semitic cornerstone of their ideology and intended to impose it in all areas they controlled.[366] Karen Armstrong has argued that the Crusades virtually institutionalized anti-Semitism in Europe, although the violence it generated did tend to wax and wane

over the next thousand years, the Enlightenment being a case in point. Nevertheless, from the outset, and especially after the passage of the Nuremburg Laws in 1935, the prognosis for the future of European Jewry under the heel of Nazism was ominous indeed.[367]

By the second half of the nineteenth century, scientific theories related to Charles Darwin's theory of organic evolution were being applied to the social order, much more in keeping with emerging modernity than the by-now quaint and medieval mythologies of blood libel and the Christ-Killer. In Germany and Austria toward the turn of the century conservative parties were forming that used anti-Semitism to explain the changing economic conditions of the time. Conditions were worse for Jews in some areas than others, but thousands emigrated to escape persecution. Many moved to the United States, but some went to Palestine in the spirit of a Jewish nationalist movement called Zionism. For all intents and purposes, the founder of the movement was Theodor Herzl, a reporter who, having covered the Dreyfus case in France, had become convinced Jews had no realistic hope of a just future except in their ancient homeland. In his book *The Jewish State* he wrote, "Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the reasonable requirements of a nation; the rest we can manage for ourselves."[368] By the 1930s the organization had grown formidably in the United States and kept a watchful eye on European events. Hoping to enlist the aid, and undoubtedly the influence, of leaders in the federal and state governments, correspondence and activism were initiated. Elbert Thomas was an important American leader whose support was successfully cultivated on the ground of his moral and ethical beliefs.

Keren Hayesod ("The Foundation Fund") had been created at the World Zionist Conference in London in July of 1920. On February 1, 1936, the United Palestine

Appeal, chaired by Rabbi Stephen Wise, had enlisted the support of Sir Herbert Samuel, M. M. Ussishkin, President of the National Jewish Fund, Felix M. Warburg, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. In a brochure circulated by Keren Hayesod, President Roosevelt had written, "The American people which has, by the action of . . . Congress, attested its sympathy with the great purpose of a national Jewish home in Palestine . . . will, I am persuaded, be ready to cooperate generously with the United Palestine Appeal which aims to provide a home for homeless Jews." Elbert Thomas felt deeply about the establishment of a Jewish homeland. By March 19, 1936, an ongoing and amicable correspondence began between the Utah Senator and Rabbi Stephen Wise. Informing Thomas of the goal of raising $3,500,000 for the United Palestine Appeal, Wise asked for his aid in the form of a statement to be used for public purposes. On March 28 Thomas responded. "The work of the United Palestine Appeal in rebuilding the Jewish homeland in Palestine has always had my wholehearted support. The success of the Palestine venture will reflect the success of other projects for the rehabilitation of mistreated Jews in other parts of the world. The economic, social and especially spiritual good coming from such a rebuilding will not only bring peace and security to many discouraged souls, but will be of inestimable benefit to the entire world."[369]

Building a Zionist homeland was not the only Jewish issue in which the Utah Senator became involved during the prewar years. On March 21, 1936, Thomas received a letter of deep concern from the president of Pacific National Life Assurance Company of Salt Lake City, Nephi Morris, concerning the circulation "in a secretive sort of way, the 'Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion.' . . . I do not believe them to be reliable. I am informed that the Courts of Berne, [sic] Switzerland declared, the Protocols to be

spurious and forgery." According to Norman Cohn in his book *Warrant for Genocide: the Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* , this anti-Semitic text had originated in Russia circa 1903 and was a fraudulent attempt to prove that a world-wide conspiracy for global control that would create Jewish hegemony through the subversion of Gentile morality and economic domination did exist.[370] Thomas passed Morris's concerns on to Rabbi Wise in a letter on April 3 and requested that he use his expertise to further inform Mr. Morris as to the origins and purposes of this document. He also wrote to Morris, directing him to Congressman Emanuel Celler (D-NY) and the remarks he had had inserted as an extension in the *Congressional Record*. He also shared other writings with Wise, including "The History of a Lie" and "The Myth of the Jewish Menace in World Affairs" in an attempt bring the truth to an American public that was being exposed to such thinking by prominent figures such as Father Coughlin, the Silver Shirt Legion, and others.

By 1936 the situation in Europe was becoming more desperate for the Jewish community, and by this time Elbert Thomas was clearly lending a sympathetic ear. On April 24, 1936, under letterhead from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he had written a letter of introduction for Frank Jonas who was travelling in Germany at the time. Describing his protégé as possessing "unusual ability and intelligence, courtesy. . . and a pleasing personality," he was also receiving information about the Nazi preparations for the 1936 Olympics.[371] Given the number of souvenir postcards in the Jonas collection, one can assume that he shared such with Thomas. In any event, the German government had pulled out all the stops to make the Nazi revolution a showpiece for the rest of the world. A track and field facility seated 100,000; there were six

gymnasiums; numerous other arenas; and the games were broadcast by radio to forty-one countries. Under the veneer, however, the games were being cynically exploited to promote racial supremacy; the*Volkischer Beobachter* made it known that no Jews or blacks would be allowed to participate. Faced with a boycott of the games by several countries, Hitler relented, and went so far as to include a token Jew, Helene Meyer, on the fencing team. Anti-Semitic signs and slogans were removed from the main tourist attractions and 800 Romani (Gypsies) were arrested and sent to the Berlin-Marzahn Concentration Camp.[372] Astute an observer as Jonas was, Elbert Thomas in all likelihood got a first-hand account of the reality of conditions for Jews in Germany as early as 1936.

He worked on relocation plans in countries who offered asylum (limited and often unrealistic though they were). Birobigan in southern Siberia had offered to take in a thousand Jewish families. He delivered addresses to Jewish associations, interfaced with acquaintances in the State Department, read reports issued on the plight of Polish Jewry, and delivered the keynote address to the American Committee for the Relief of Jews in Poland on June 30. Corresponding regularly with Rabbi Wise, he became an important ally for the American Jewish Congress.[373]

As the situation worsened abroad in 1937, Elbert Thomas stepped up his efforts. In December Charles Schwager of New York thanked him for his work, calling him "an American liberal and a friend of the Jewish people [willing to] use your influence in the House of Congress whenever an opportunity offers against anti-Semitic movements in this country."[374] In 1938 after the *Anschluss* he received appeals from the Jewish Peoples Committee on behalf of the plight of Austria's Jews, and a request from Rabbi Louis D. Gross, publisher of the *Jewish Examiner*, for help in persuading the Department of State

to increase the immigration quotas by 50 or 60 percent. On March 28, 1938, under the heading NOT FOR PUBLICATION the minutes of a conference with State and Labor and the Jewish Peoples Committee were recorded concerning Austrian and German refugees in particular. Cordell Hull presided. How instrumental Thomas was in bringing this meeting about is not known. State was less than enthusiastic, citing obstacles to such proposals. Sumner Welles, Under-Secretary of State, nonetheless assured the group of American intentions to do "their very best to facilitate immigration . . . *within the existing bounds established by statutory law."* (Italics mine.) The committee did ask for immediate asylum for Professor Sigmund Freud , Professor Otto Loewi (Nobelist), and Professor Henrich Neuman. They were told they would be "kept informed." (Ibid.) The wheels of justice seemed to grind more slowly than usual, at least until September 1, 1939.[375]

As Germany swallowed up increasingly large chunks of European territory, attention turned away from the plight of the Jews, particularly after December 7, 1941. Elbert Thomas continued his involvement. (This frenetic activity may have been therapeutic for him. His partner, helpmate, friend, and wife to whom he had been so devoted, Edna Harker Thomas, died on April 29, 1942, of apparent heart failure. He would marry again in 1946, his secretary Ethel.) He was a guest speaker at the tenth annual Third Seder on April 5, 1942, dedicated to the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labor in Eretz Israel) where he said, "In the past 20 years, over a half million Jews have returned to Palestine. All thoughtful men realize that the Jewish aspirations for a redeemed Palestine is something more than a mere desire for expedience. The desire of generations is being fulfilled, and the Gentile peoples will still aid the Jew to restore his

Homeland. A better day is surely coming."[376] It was a hopeful statement, but regrettably not to be, at least for a number of years.

He was also making observations about the postwar world. He was quoted in *The New York Times* on June 23, 1942, as stating that the white man's domination of the so-called "backward" nations had been broken and the world that would emerge after the fighting ended would be one of "free nations and greater racial independence." He believed the war would be over by 1947, but cautioned that peace would not necessarily come with the end of the war, implying the need to extend American ideals throughout the world. After the war, and on this he was adamant, a United Nations peace force must be put in place, blaming the failure of the League of Nations on the basis of its never having been "worldwide in concept or realization."[377]

On December 1, 1942, he delivered an address in which he noted that "it is the tenth year of war for the Jewish people. It is the first time in history that the physical extermination of a whole people—the Jewish people—has become the declared policy, in fact, one of the major policies and war aims, of a powerful, aggressive nation." But by the end of 1942, what had been dismissed by many as exaggeration, simply too horrific to be believed, was beginning to leak out of Europe. For many, these revelations, in Deborah Lipstadt's words, were simply "beyond belief."[378]

Gerhart Riegner was the representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland who had himself fled Hitler's Germany. On August 1, 1942, he had heard from a leading German industrialist that months before Hitler had ordered the extermination of all the Jews of Europe. The informant, whose own life was in danger in relaying this, had specific information that was chilling, including the instrument of

murder which was an economical insecticide called Zyklon B. Riegner was used to macabre stories, having heard more than his share about the disappearance of Polish Jews and the murder of Russian Jews by special killing squads called *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile units who had gone to work shortly after the German invasion of Russia in June of 1941. And Riegner's informant was no hysterical escapee: he was a high-ranking official in a firm employing 30,000 people and had access to Hitler's headquarters. Riegner, only thirty years old and trained for a career in international law, took the information to the American consulate in Geneva on August 8, 1942; the consul found the report "fantastic."[379]

On July 1 the Polish government-in-exile had released a report from underground sources that validated what Riegner's informant had said. The story was confirmed by Szmul Zygielbojm, whose wife and children had been murdered by the Nazis, and who had himself fought in defense of Warsaw and then miraculously escaped to England. Riegner, by now convinced, made a radio broadcast over the BBC calling on the governments of Great Britain and the United States to put an end to the killing. "For if we do not try to find means of stopping it," he said, "we shall bear part of the moral responsibility." Riegner's message reached Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York, who immediately contacted Sumner Welles, who had also had messages from Riegner himself, but was skeptical.[380] Welles, too, believed mass murder was illogical, given the German need for labor. Nevertheless, he assured Wise that the information would reach Roosevelt. On November 24 he asked Wise to come to the State Department. He was now convinced of the truth in the reports, which were released to the press, no doubt with Roosevelt's blessing. The public reacted with denunciations and demonstrations and a

Day of Mourning on December 2.[381] Although most newspapers gave the story wide coverage, Laurel Leff contends that the *New York Times* held back, placing this and two related stories on page ten. [382](The authors of *U. S. Intelligence and the Nazis* contend that two young American Jews working in the OSS Research and Analysis Department, Abraham Duker and Charles Irving Dwork, recognized it when it was going on and created probably the largest body of OSS information about the Holocaust in existence).

Elbert Thomas was deluged with mail and in great demand for speaking engagements and written commentaries. In March of 1943 Loyal Americans of German Descent asked him to make a radio address on their behalf. "There is at present a definite undercurrent against both teaching and studying German, while on the other hand the knowledge of this language is in demand because of war and post war [sic] needs. We have the feeling that this situation asks for action," executive secretary G. P. Bronisch wrote. Attached to the letter was a brief brochure explaining why German should be studied. "At a time when passions rise to a high pitch—as they must, so that we may win the battle for freedom against Nazism," it read, " we are likely in blindness to destroy valuable assets." The numerous cultural contributions to western civilization made by Germanic peoples were also listed, including music, poetry, art, philosophy, economics, and history. No mention was made of ghastly recent revelations, nor would doing so have served any useful purpose. Thomas replied by telegram that he should be glad to oblige "if your organization will make all arrangements and draft talk."[383]

Given the volume of mail he received, most letters were supportive to a remarkable degree. On February 16, 1943, the Jewish Peoples Committee sent him a five page document entitled "The Nazi Extermination of the Jewish People," which outlined

the "blueprint for mass murder" and was highly detailed regarding Nazi depredations, "cold figures" (statistics of the dead, deported, and enslaved), and an opening quote from *Grossraum Ordnung und Grossraum Verwaltung,* an essay written by the chief Gestapo jurist Karl Rudolph Werner Best. "History," he had written, "teaches that the annihilation of an alien people is not contrary to the laws of life provided the annihilation is complete." Hitler, the brochure concluded, did not intend to enslave the world, but only part of it. The Jews would be completely extinguished. Private citizens wrote asking that havens of refuge be opened. Michael Rosenberg of the Bronx concluded his letter with "Remember! Action not compassion."[384]

Congress Weekly: A Review of Jewish Interests advertised on February 26, 1943, a mass demonstration of protest to be held at Madison Square Garden. The American Jewish Congress in cooperation with the C. I. O. sponsored a mass meeting on March 1, 1943. Numerous such gatherings were held, one of the most acclaimed being Ben Hecht's play *We Will Never Die,* produced by Billy Rose and Ernst Lubitsch. This dramatic pageant held on March 9, again at the Garden, featured famous Hollywood actors and personalities. Forty thousand people were in attendance, but Hecht was discouraged. "The pageant has accomplished nothing. Actually all we have done is make a lot of Jews cry, which is not a unique accomplishment." A petition of "Scholars and Scientists" was sent to the President on March 22, appealing to him to "speak and act."[385] Public sentiment for some sort of tangible action was clearly building. In acquiescence to this rise in public sentiment and outrage, the State Department in cooperation with the government of Great Britain announced a conference to be held in Bermuda in April. Bermuda was chosen for a variety of reasons: it was militarily controlled, but it was also

very difficult to get to. From the outset the entire conception of what would take place at the meetings was viewed by the Jewish community with skepticism.

From the beginning the delegates were highly negative in terms of the hope of any substantive action. Conferees repeatedly referred to the "problems" and "hurdles," with which they were faced. A report released by the Inter-Allied Information Committee in London was gruesome in its descriptions, but as the days passed news stories became increasingly brief and in remote sections of the dailies. It was in reality little more than a propaganda device that failed. Emanuel Celler called it a "puppet show" and not a very good one at that. Wise called the conference a "tragic disappointment."[386] One ad, sponsored by the Bergson group, stretched across six columns of the *New York Times* calling Bermuda "a cruel mockery." (Peter Bergson was a twenty-seven year-old Zionist activist who had come to the United States from Jerusalem in search of public support for a Jewish state in Palestine.) When the Zionist Committee for a Jewish Army criticized the meeting, Senator Harry S. Truman resigned claiming that the United States Senate had been insulted. Szmul Zygielbojom , one of the heroes of Warsaw and the eyewitness who had corroborated Riegner's informant, committed suicide in protest. But in reality, the conference had accomplished what it had been designed to do, which was to relax public pressure for action. The *Times* ad can be found in the Thomas collection. His name does not appear on the list.[387]

Despite the discouraging results of the Bermuda Conference, Elbert Thomas did not slacken his pace. In early June Dr. Wise and the United Jewish War Effort asked him to contribute a message to Jewish soldiers serving in the armed forces. "No one," he wrote, "more than a Jew understands what this war is about. Therefore I am not surprised

to learn of the great contribution our Jewish boys are making in the service. I trust that their zeal in fighting for a cause will be an example for all." In August he received a letter of gratitude for his work from Samuel Hyman, a Jewish soldier serving in the field. Thomas endorsed a series of twelve resolutions submitted to a mass meeting at Boston Garden on May 2, 1943, urging among other things, that the federal government and United Nations take immediate steps to provide sanctuary in neutral countries for Hitler's victims and the implementation of a rescue program. He agreed to participate in panel discussions, along with other notable public figures and scholars in the Emergency Conference to Save the Jews of Europe at the Commodore Hotel in New York City, July 7 through 11, 1943.[388] Also associated with the conference were Harold Ickes, Senators Guy Gillette, Edwin Johnson, William Langer, labor leaders William Green and Philip Murray, and journalists William Randolph Hearst and William Allen White.[389]

Thomas seemed to grasp that, in Elie Wiesel's words, this was "humanity's tragedy," and went to work to draft legislation creating a commission to plan a rescue mission which he sent to Secretary Cordell Hull. He also asked Hull's opinion as to whether an executive order might be more expeditious. But he encountered stiff resistance in conversations with Breckinridge Long at State. Unreceptive to the whole idea, Long argued at length that rescue was not a viable or necessary plan of action. He cited the achievements of the Evian and Bermuda Conferences, pointed out that State had issued 500 visas, and that an Intergovernmental Committee was already at work and increased efforts might be interpreted as interferential. Consequently the United States government (and Great Britain) remained largely ineffectual. Tiny Denmark, on the other hand, because of the efforts of non-Jews, was able to save 8,000 Danish Jews by finding

them refuge in Sweden and safely smuggling them there.

By December, despite testimony Long had given in the Senate and the adamant resistance of certain factions in the Jewish community, including Zionists, members of the Jewish press, and the majority of Jews in Congress, the idea began to pick up support. Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee Tom Connally (Dem-Texas) had reservations about even holding hearings. In an act of deft political legerdemain, Gillette and Thomas brought the issue up when Connally was absent shortly before Christmas and the committee members approved it unanimously. Again stating that the problem was a humanitarian one and not exclusively Jewish, they characterized it as a problem for "enlightened civilization" and maintained that the "time to act is long past due." Despite the opposition of Sol Bloom, arguably the most influential Jew in Congress, and less than enthusiastic support from Roosevelt, the proposal continued to gain momentum. And at the last moment the President took action by signing an executive order that created the War Refugee Board. (It has been argued, cynically perhaps, that 1944 was an election year and FDR's action was pragmatically taken to court the Jewish vote.) Elbert Thomas's activism had been a major factor in its creation.[390]

The killing continued into 1944, but clearly the tide was turning against the Axis. Thomas had broadcast an address on CBS on behalf of refugees and critical of British policy on Palestine on August 8, 1944. Deletions had been made in the speech by "an unidentified CBS employee" who had done so for "reasons not clear." The *New York Post* printed an apology from CBS the following day. [391]

As Allied forces continued to close in on Germany, the American public began to offer suggestions for shaping the postwar world. They ranged from the fairly sensible to

the bizarre to the downright criminal. F. J. Blake of Chicago wrote to Thomas suggesting that another war would be in the offing in twenty years, since it was widely known that Germans "breed like rats." "Germany must be absolutely destroyed" because "there will be more Germans than there ever were before, and if we put in an army of occupation among that excess of German girls we'll be fighting our own children and grand children [sic] who will have been taught to hate us. Now is the time to do the job right." Apparently mass murder was a viable solution as long as the right group was being murdered. Oscar Van Cott of Salt Lake City wrote a four page letter in which he outlined an elaborate plan for rehabilitating Germany. He urged the Allies to "hang Hitler and his leaders and also the Gestapo and other friends," confiscate and redistribute all German land and property as reparation, and make the Germans a refugee people by expelling them from Germany. "A few criminal gangsters," he said, caused the war, and in a veiled threat implied that Allied government officials worldwide would be held responsible for World War III. Japan was not to be spared, but along with Germany was to "become extinct. As nations Germany and Japan must die." He acknowledged that he had long admired Thomas, but "if our Utah delegation lets Germany off with too easy terms, then you all are my enemies and I am yours."[392]

The look of the postwar world, however, was a serious topic and Elbert Thomas had been entertaining different approaches as early as 1943. Humanitarian issues, as well as political, social, and economic questions, would require careful thought, and after Hiroshima and Nagasaki these questions deepened into an ethical and moral quandary.

People of conscience by war's end were confronted with formulating policies that would punish the guilty who had brutalized conquered populations in ways and on a scale

heretofore unknown in so-called "civilized" society. "One of the most perplexing of all the variegated postwar problems to be studied and solved with judicial calmness and circumspection," Elbert Thomas wrote, "is the proper disposal of 'war criminals'—men who ordered, directed and approved the orgy of rape, robbery, revenge and wholesale murder, in other words, sadistic egomaniacs who maintain that 'might makes right.'" The chief offender, in his opinion, had been Adolf Hitler. He divided these perpetrators into three classes: small fry, traitors, and leaders. He opposed the death penalty as "inadequate." In an article in *American Magazine* in January of 1943 he was advocating exile for Hitler, Tojo, and Hirohito, and issued a warning to those who had violated the most basic guidelines for civilized behavior that a roster was being kept by the United Nations. This "is a list of individuals responsible for atrocities" who would be hunted down, arrested, and tried at war's end.[393] In November of 1944 the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation Bulletin carried on its front page a statement by Peter Bergson concerning the punishment of Germany for war crimes committed against the Hebrew people and demanding Hebrew representation on the United Nations War Crimes Commission. "There is a wide-spread impression that a joint agency of the United Nations, known as the United Nations War Crimes Commission, is sitting in London and is assembling data that would make it possible to bring to just trial the people who participated in these cruelties," Bergson wrote. "This impression is totally erroneous. . . . In the case of the Hebrews slaughtered by the Germans, a great many were subjects of the Axis nations." Having been deprived of their citizenship in occupied territory, they were considered "stateless" and therefore ineligible to participate. The Germans had not only

usurped real estate but also attempted to exterminate "entire segments of the populations."[394]

In addition to his many responsibilities and involvements, Thomas was facing re-election in 1944, as was President Roosevelt. At the Democratic National Convention in July in Chicago, Roosevelt was not present (the first nominee in the twentieth century not to appear) since he was in the South Pacific consulting with Douglas MacArthur on military strategy. His nomination was largely unchallenged despite his obvious decline in health; the contention lay in who would be nominated for Vice-President. A significant number of delegates and party leaders were adamantly opposed to Henry Wallace as the nominee because of his left-wing tendencies. Instead the convention chose moderate Senator Harry S. Truman of Missouri, who was well known because of his chairmanship of a Senate wartime investigating committee. Roosevelt agreed, albeit reluctantly, since he had personal ties to Wallace and knew virtually nothing about Truman.[395]

As for Thomas, there was no question as to his renomination given his formidable record and his powerful and prestigious assignments in the Senate. The Republicans nominated Adam S. Bennion, a former LDS educator who was in 1944 serving as president of Utah Power and Light. (He would later be called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles by Mormon Church President David O. McKay.) He would prove to be a somewhat lackluster candidate whose defeatist attitudes, lack of any substantive attention to or interest in Utah problems, and reputation as a yes-man were repeated with regularity by the Democrats.[396]

Roosevelt's unprecedented nomination for a fourth term provided Thomas with the opportunity to point to the Democratic record in his own campaign. Although the

careers of his Utah colleagues had been less than stable, Thomas looked to be on steady ground. (Senator William King had been less than discreet in his criticisms of the National Democratic Party, and liberal opposition to him resulted in his being rejected in 1940 as the nominee. Liberal Congressman Abe Murdock ran successfully on the ticket, but served only one term. He was defeated in 1946 by Republican Arthur Watkins.) A press release, although it is undated, appears to have been issued early in the campaign, and notes Thomas's defeat of Smoot in 1932 and his predominant position in "party councils and in the state elections." Utah, despite defections to the Republican column in states like Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, and Idaho (and predictions that Utah would follow), the writer continues, will remain loyal to the Democratic Party with Thomas as its rallying point. "Thomas's record in the Senate has not been picturesque," the writer admits, "but it has been consistently progressive and constructive at all times. He has seemed to understand the theory of growth in relation to political changes and his voting record is a consistent one from the standpoint of building up the American people. He believes that government exists for the benefit of the men, women, and children of America . . ."[397]

Not surprisingly his campaign literature took the high road; Elbert Thomas would always believe that his record spoke for itself, although one brochure did point out Bennion's lack of experience and implied a lack of concern regarding issues facing ordinary working people. Concentrating on his position as president of Utah Power and Light, it compared Thomas's opponent to an applicant for a job (the United States Senate) and noted that no job application in business asked anything but what the applicant had done and nothing about what he intended to do. Also mentioned were

Bennion's support from "arch isolationists" and a *caveat* that he would work against agencies giving low interest loans to farmers, home owners, and small business. He was characterized as a man with a complete lack of progressive vision. The last section was entitled "Have We Been Too Hard on Mr. Bennion?" and concluded that he had been a sort of "state entertainer, always ready to address any gathering with an innocuous sermonette. But bad manners or not [sic] that is a fact." [398]

However, the majority of campaign literature was more positive and relied almost exclusively on Thomas's background and his Senatorial record. His close connection with Roosevelt and the New Deal was repeatedly emphasized, as were his incorruptibility, spiritual ideals, and efforts on behalf of the "unfortunate and the sorely pressed." He was responsible for bringing "hundreds of millions (600,000,000 dollars)" in war contracts to Utah, Geneva Steel included, championing the rights of veterans, educators, farmers, miners, labor, businessmen, and stockmen. His international connections and his knowledge of the Far East had been vital to the war effort, which by 1944 looked to be coming to a successful conclusion.[399]

Not everyone was so enthusiastic about Thomas and his vision for the country's future. A *Deseret News* editorial dated May 16, 1944, was entitled "With Mr. Thomas on a Flight Into Fancy." The writer took Thomas to task regarding a brief report he had presented at a conference in Philadelphia sponsored by the International Labor Organization. Ultimately the Declaration of Philadelphia that resulted from this conference reaffirmed progressive belief that labor is not a commodity, freedom of expression and association are essential to progress, poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity anywhere, and that the "war against want" must be carried on with

"unrelenting vigor." Noting that Thomas and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins had called for "full employment and social advancement . . . social security, child welfare, legislation to improve working conditions," the *News* concluded that he had painted a "beautiful, though somewhat hazy, mental picture." Additionally, the editorial writer goes on to say, "he barely mentions another resolution at the conference at the behest of employer representatives . . . It would seem to us that two things [are] drastically wrong with what appears to be the senator's approach . . ." Full employment comes "perilously close to . . .'directed' or 'regimented' employment," the implication being that government would have carte blanche to meddle in business affairs. The second concern was that government would become "all powerful, guaranteeing all rights and dishing out all jobs and alms." In conclusion, the writer notes Thomas's "paternal pride in this postwar planning . . . sometimes his constituents wish he would keep one foot a little closer to mother earth on these flights into fancy."[400]

This characterization of Thomas as a starry-eyed idealist did not go unnoticed by his supporters. Endorsements for his reelection poured in from groups that, since the beginning had been enthusiastically appreciative of his efforts, including boilermakers, iron ship builders, railroad trainmen, oil refiners, locomotive firemen, enginemen, and small businessmen. John David of the "Negro Division" of the Democratic Party in New York State wrote, expressing appreciation to the Utah delegation (Abe Murdock, Walter Granger, and Elbert Thomas) for their leadership in the fight to abolish the poll tax "to the bitter end." Tom Dewey, he noted, had been elected governor of New York on a state platform that promised to abolish the poll tax laws, but when the bill appeared in Congress he "straddled the issue and refused to urge the Republicans to act. . . The

Democratic Party is the party of Progress. It is supported by friends of the Negro people . . . under Roosevelt more gains have been made than ever before . . . the Republican Party is the party of double talk."[401]

When the election took place, five months after the successful Normandy invasion, it was clear that Utah was committed to stay with its wartime leaders, at least until the war was over. Roosevelt carried Utah for the fourth time with a 52,000 vote margin over Dewey and Elbert Thomas was returned to the Senate, defeating Bennion 148,738 to 99,532. Both incumbents were returned to the House and the Utah legislature remained under Democratic control with a forty-five to fifteen margin in the House of Representatives and eighteen to five in the Senate. The possibilities for restructuring the postwar world appeared bright, optimistic, and visionary.[402]

With the German defeat and the liberation of Europe accomplished, Elbert Thomas, who had done so much to call attention to the Nazi policy of mass murder, continued to support bringing the guilty to justice. An exhibit of life-size photo murals had been mounted at the Library of Congress and drew nearly 35,000 visitors over a week's period of time. Thomas, recently returned from Europe and emotionally raw from what he had seen there, reminded the shocked and silent visitors that Japan had yet to be defeated and still the "job" would not be done. "We must begin to rebuild this desolate world for a future in which the hope of everlasting peace will rest on a new brotherhood of man, a future where men and women everywhere will know the priceless value of those things we revere in our own country—freedom from oppression, equality of opportunity and equal justice under the law."[403] The Third Reich was excoriated by speakers for their racist ideology which emphasized the superiority of the state to the

needs of the individual. "This," one reporter said, "is the antithesis of American ideals of democracy and freedom."

In assessing Thomas's attitude regarding Japan, surrender, and the fate of the Emperor, it is important to remember the personal connections he had formed with the Japanese as a young man. He believed that in order to "unify Japan in surrender" the militaristic clique that had started an aggressive war of expansion needed to be broken up. By war's end his attitude had evolved somewhat, in that he had come to believe that retaining the emperor would create a stability advantageous to American occupational forces. He had also come to think that preservation of the Chrysanthemum Throne would initiate in ordinary Japanese a realization of responsibility for the nation's predatory behavior. After Hiroshima, he still believed that psychological warfare and Russian entry into the war were more powerful than nuclear energy. "Some think that surrender will be brought about by bombs, some by invasion, some by psychological warfare. I think the way it must be done is by convincing the Japanese people that these desperate men must be driven out and a sensible government set up." [404]

On August 8, 1945, a short article appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune* that outlined the American plan to invade Japan with an overwhelming force of over six million men. "Military opinion on the value of the bomb has begun to jell. Some army sources see an end of the war in two weeks, but most are more cautious." "One of the few mercies of the late century," Edward Drea later wrote, "is that the invasion of Japan never happened." [405] Operation Olympic, the ground invasion of Japan as planned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was to begin on November 1. But American intelligence, code name Ultra, had intercepted Japanese communications that told of a "mind boggling" buildup.

By August 6, 600,000 Japanese were in place supported by stockpiles of suicide planes, human torpedoes, and women training with sharpened spears. A repeat of the carnage on Tarawa and Okinawa bleakly loomed in the future as Kyushu transformed itself into a *kamikaze* island.

Would Japan have surrendered if we had refrained from dropping the bomb? Drea believes chances are against it. But the most frightening news did not have to do with logistical strength: nowhere could be found among the Japanese any pessimism or sense of defeat. The entire population, it appeared, was willing to go down fighting and to take as many invading Americans as possible with it. When General Marshall asked for a prediction of possible American casualties, Douglas MacArthur estimated that 105,050 would be suffered over a ninety-day period, with an additional 12,600 noncombat deaths. The Japanese, it seemed, intended to make American losses severe enough to raise questions about the wisdom of continuing this costliest of wars leading to a negotiated peace. Despite the gloominess of this prognostication, in reality most of the Japanese troop strength in the build-up was a mixed bag: ill-informed, green, and inadequately supplied. With a sort of gallows humor they referred to themselves as "victim units." It should be noted, however, that in the Japanese soldier being sullen did not evolve into defeatism or mutiny. Even after the first atomic bomb was dropped, the dispassionate description of a city 80 percent wiped out seemed to indicate that surrender was even then not imminent.[406]

Every week since Pearl Harbor Elbert Thomas had spoken to the Japanese about the futility of their cause. Senators were sharply divided on tactics. Thomas continued to believe in the value of psychological warfare and persuasive argument. However,

invasion, American leadership wearily agreed, must of necessity proceed. Marshall was seriously considering the use of atomic bombs in support of beachhead operations. In hindsight, the possibility is chilling. In 1945 no one, scientist or layman alike, envisioned the hellish effect of radioactivity that would most certainly have rendered Japan a poisoned "world of the dead" for decades. And American victors would have suffered equally with the vanquished.

Elbert Thomas's war record was formidable. Few Senators were more visible and respected throughout the United States, and certainly none had worked harder. He realized that he would stand for re-election in 1950, but not unjustifiably believed the record spoke for itself. But the world was a much different place than it had been in 1933 when he first entered the Senate chambers. It was assuredly more dangerous.

Benito Mussolini had once dismissed democracy as "sand driven by wind," and America as a nation of Prohibitionists and gangsters. But by 1949 Prohibition was a memory, gangsters had, except for the most flamboyant among them, been driven underground, and American democracy had prevailed. Yet the euphoria that accompanied VJ Day had, it appeared, been "driven by wind." Prewar colonialism, except for the interests of historians, was drifting into obscurity. The Philippines, a turn of the century erstwhile symbol of an imperialistic America come into its own, had been granted its long-awaited independence. But beneath the surface of American life lurked the disquieting sensation that the old prewar verities were simply no longer relevant. The rapidity of change, always unsettling, was beginning to manifest itself in a deep-seated American anxiety regarding its own omnipotence in the face of an increasingly belligerent Soviet Union. Eric Goldman called 1949 the "year of shocks." Chairman Mao

had won China and the Soviets had detonated their first atomic bomb. Small wonder that scapegoats were sought—and found.

Coarse, semantically brutal, borderline alcoholic Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin had been voted the "worst in the Senate" by the press corps. Gauche and volatile, he had an almost pathological need to see his name in print. Subtlety was not in him, yet he had certain abilities: an unapologetic penchant for lying, an uncanny grasp of the power of mass communications (television in particular), and an intuitive feel for how distressing foreign developments of the postwar years had disturbed the American people. He had earned the enmity of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle for his impatience and generally uncouth tactics. In trouble at home for questionable financial activity and his ill-concealed dealings with bookies, he was fishing about for a campaign issue on which he could get himself re-elected in 1952. He found one. What was wrong, he said, lay within American government itself, which was riddled with Communist sympathizers and liberal holdovers from the New Deal years. [407] Utah's senior Senator, whose cerebral talents and innate decency had made him one of the most important and respected members of the Senate, believed he could win re-election by running on his not inconsiderable record of achievement. In the succeeding months as the rhetoric became shriller and the circle of suspicion widened, collateral damage was inevitable. Elbert Thomas was one such casualty.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 9

THE ROOT IN DISORDER

On June 1, 1950, Senator Margaret Chase Smith, (R-ME) delivered a speech on the floor of the United States Senate. Entitled the "Declaration of Conscience," it followed Joe McCarthy's Wheeling speech by less than four months. Her address was endorsed by six other moderate/liberal Republicans. In essence it was a courageous criticism of national leadership and issued a call for the country, the United States Senate, and the Republican Party to re-examine the tactics being used by the House Un-American Activities Committee and Senator Joseph McCarthy, although he was not named. (Senator McCarthy (R-WI) had spoken on radio station WWVA in Wheeling West, Virginia, in February of 1950 claiming treason in the State Department. Unfortunately the tape was erased immediately after the broadcast, but the word was out.) It was a statement of what Senator Smith defined as the basic principles of "Americanism:" the right to criticize, the right to hold unpopular beliefs, the right to protest, and the right to independent thought. Smith was deeply concerned that in the current political climate those exercising those beliefs risked being labeled communist or fascist. In the Declaration she stated, "The Democratic administration has greatly lost the confidence of the American people by its complacency to the threat of communism . . . it is time for a change. . . Yet to displace it with a Republican regime embracing a philosophy that lacks political integrity or intellectual honesty would prove equally disastrous to this nation. . . .

But I don't want to see the Republican Party to ride to political victory on the Four Horsemen of Calumny—Fear, Ignorance, Bigotry, and Smear."

Six other Senators signed the Declaration: Wayne Morse of Oregon, George Aiken of Vermont, Edward Thye of Minnesota, Irving Ives of New York, Charles Tobey of New Hampshire, and Robert C. Hendrickson of New Jersey.[408] The only signatory who remained committed was Wayne Morse of Oregon, who eventually became an independent and then a Democrat.

The initial reception was less than warm. When the Korean War broke out 24 days later, Smith's hope for cooler heads was dashed. Republican candidates ran across the country on precisely the charges of disloyalty that Senator Smith had condemned. But the capstone was passage of the McCarran Internal Security Act (the Subversive Activities Control Act) named after Nevada's conservative Democratic Senator Pat McCarran. The legislation required the registration of Communist organizations with the United States Attorney General and established the Subversive Activities Control Board to investigate persons suspected of engaging in subversive activities or otherwise promoting the establishment of a "totalitarian dictatorship," fascist or communist. Members of these groups were denied citizenship and in some cases prevented from entering or leaving the country. Citizen-members would be denaturalized in five years.[409] A key institution of the Cold War, it was enacted over Truman's veto, overridden by a Democratic-controlled Congress. Truman called it "the greatest danger to freedom of speech, press, and assembly since the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798."[410]

Less than five years before, the United States had been at the apex of its power, prestige, world-wide respect, and self-confidence. The Second World War, which had

been seen as an effort to preserve and protect the traditions of American life, had ended up transforming them, and often in ways that were confusing at best, terrifying at worst. The battle against fascism had placed foreign policy center stage in American concerns, and the growing turmoil between the United States and the Soviet Union brought about the evolution of an American policy whose first concern was economic and military security. Not surprisingly (and not for the first time nor the last) preoccupation with said security came at a cost, and in this case the cost was the limitation of dissent at home which somehow raised the hope that this would combat communism overseas. Questions were also raised about governmental power and the effectiveness of New Deal-style activist government. An overview of events between 1946 and 1950 need not be lengthy to be revealing. In the aftermath of August 6, 1945, it was clear that the control of atomic energy would become a major global concern. Bernard Baruch came up with such a proposal. Republicans gained control of Congress in the November elections. The following year the Truman Doctrine was announced, with the President saying that U. S. security interests were now worldwide and involved the fate of "free peoples" everywhere, not just in troubled Greece and Turkey. HUAC began its hearings on Communist infiltration of Hollywood. George Kennan's article was published on "containment." The Marshall Plan was adopted, Taft-Hartley labor act passed. The Berlin airlift began in 1948, NATO was established in 1949. That same year China "fell" to the Communists and the Russians ended the American monopoly on nuclear power. And in 1950, a crucial election year, the Korean War broke out, McCarthy's charges began to seep out, and the McCarran Act was passed.[411]

The road that led to this disturbing development in American political life had

been, albeit brief, a circuitous one. And among the issues to which Elbert Thomas had devoted himself virtually from the beginning of his senatorial career were the ones that would be interpreted—perhaps even twisted—in such a way that they would contribute to his downfall in the election of 1950. For twenty years he had been a supporter of Zionism, the worldwide Jewish community, and the goal to create from Palestine a homeland for "stateless" Jews. The issue could politically be traced back to the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, near the end of World War I. United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour and the Second Baron Walter Rothschild transmitted to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland the declaration of the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people . . . best endeavors" without prejudicing the "civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" or rights of Jews anywhere else. Balfour himself stated that the needs of Zionism were more profound than the "desires of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land."[412]

British generosity can be explained in several ways. It provided useful propaganda in Russia and America, and it was supported by legal luminaries such as Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter. Professor James Gelvin maintains, perhaps cynically, that it attracted significant Jewish financial forces. In any case, support in the United Kingdom was anything but unanimous. Winston Churchill pointed out the costs, both financial and in terms of Arab opposition. Nevertheless, the idea had taken root decades before and Zionists clung to it tenaciously, particularly after the butchery of the Holocaust came to light following World War II. One American who gave it his wholehearted support was Elbert Thomas.[413]

In August of 1944, the Columbia Broadcasting System chose to censor three pertinent statements from an address Thomas delivered to the closing session of the second national conference of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People on behalf of the American Palestine Committee, of which he was a member of the Executive Council. Speaking on behalf of Hungarian Jews (deportation to Auschwitz had begun in earnest between March and July of 1944), Thomas stated that Jews remaining in Hungary had been issued visas to enter Palestine. The deleted text included the observation that responsibility for their safety now rested on English shoulders, that both Democrats and Republicans in America had urged the opening of Palestine to the Jews, and the third referred to a Jewish army in which he urged the United Nations to permit "Hebrew guerrilla bands . . . be given the chance to fight in their own name and under their own banner in a Hebrew army." CBS gave no reasons for the deletions. It can, however, be inferred that any criticism of British policy was considered by the CBS editorial board to be unwise.[414]

Although other plans for the disposition of Jewish refugees following the war were suggested—settlement on Madagascar and the transfer of the Western Rhineland or Tripolitania or both to France in compensation—the vast majority of correspondence, both individual and organizational, that Thomas received was enthusiastically in favor of creation of a Palestinian homeland. One document concluded "Go forward and achieve your historic destiny. Go forward and rebuild your ancient inheritance. We stand beside you in your noble aspirations."[415] Telegrams were sent by Dr. Samuel Friedman to Senators James Mead and Alben Barkley and Congressmen John McCormack and Sol Bloom as well as President Truman pleading the case. On August 14, 1946, McCormack

replied that he would support the admission of 100,000 "unfortunate" Jews immediately without their admission being tied to any other question. (This belief was reiterated by Carl Hermann Voss in his pamphlet based on an article "Questions and Answers on the Palestine Problem" which appeared in the September 1946 issue of *The Woman's Press*, official organ of the Young Women's Christian Association. A minister and Chairman of the American Christian Palestine Committee, Voss also advocated the "entry into Palestine of 100,000 Jewish refugees from Europe without any qualifying conditions." He additionally called for "every possible pressure" being brought to bear on Great Britain to expedite this.)[416]

So the debate continued, and was by no means without its opponents, ranging from the politically astute genuinely well-schooled and concerned about the region to an uninformed clearly anti-Semitic lunatic fringe. As has been noted at some length above, Elbert Thomas had been involved in the disposition of this question for over twenty years, and continued to be active as the territory moved closer to legitimate nationhood. The nonsectarian Anti-Nazi League had written to him in July of 1946 expressing concern about a "dangerous and heavily financed lobbying group which is now engaged in stirring up American opposition to the plan . . . operating close to the Arab League." On November 19, 1947 President Truman wrote to Thomas admitting he had been "wrestling with the Palestine problem for two and one-half years. . . . I have about come to the conclusion," he said, "that the Palestine problem is insoluble but I suppose we will have to keep working with it."[417]

"The Zionist Illusion" by W. T. Stace (no date), a somewhat lengthy pamphlet, claims that "The Zionist movement and the Nazi movement are so similar that it is

difficult to distinguish between them in nearly all their fundamental doctrines. Many distinguished authorities believe that the Nazi beliefs were patterned after the Zionist beliefs." (Who the "distinguished authorities" were is not mentioned.) Another (no author noted) calls Zionism THE MOST *GIGANTIC*, THE MOST *DISHONORABLE* AND THE MOST *DISHONEST* FRAUD IN *ALL HISTORY*. It is structured into two columns, one entitled Zionist Untruth, the other Truthful Fact. It concludes with "Zionists know that they have neither a historical, racial or spiritual right to possession of Palestine and seek to put a meaning on these documents which even a moron would not do if he read them through." The most elaborate was an anti-Zionist screed published by William H. Murray of Tishiomingo, Oklahoma, running to forty-six pages of argument that places the blame on Jewish finance, Judge [Robert] Jackson's violation of "Division of Powers – Nuermburg [sic] trials," "Pharisees" seeking "race mixture . . . seeking to destroy both white and negro races," the Trek "with Russia pushing them along," and concludes with an indictment of the "League" and "One World Roosevelt." One individual from Lincoln, Nebraska, wrote to Thomas to suggest that Jews read God's economic law and recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Another well-wisher from Ogden, Utah, suggests that since Jews have never contributed anything but misery and poverty to human culture, they deserve to remain scattered.[418]

Nevertheless, the newly formed United Nations felt differently. Israel was granted its independence under a Provisional State Council on May 14, 1948, with elections to be held in January of 1949. Almost immediately forces from Egypt, Trans-Jordan, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Lebanon, and Syria attacked across its borders. Despite its stormy, controversial and often violent past, the Israel for which Elbert Thomas so devoutly

wished and worked continues to the present day. [419]

Americans in the early years of the twenty-first century should remember that mean-spirited rhetoric in the country's politics is nothing new. After the Nazi Party came to power in January of 1933, the House Un-American Activities Committee directed its investigatory energies toward fascist propaganda during which time the Committee accumulated 4,300 pages of testimony from a parade of witnesses. In a curious sideline that verged on bad drama, Co-chairman Samuel Dickstein, D-NY, was accused of taking 1,250 dollars per month from the Soviet Union's People's Commissar for Internal Affairs (Narodnyy Komissariat Unutrennikh Del/NKVD) in exchange for privileged information regarding the findings of the committee. His guilt or innocence were never conclusively proven. (As early as March of 1937, Thomas received a letter from the editor of *The American Hebrew* questioning the clamor on the part of McCormack and Dickstein into "un-American" (i.e., Jewish) propaganda. In their book *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America During the Stalin Era,* Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev corroborate Dickstein's receiving money from the NKVD under the code name "Crook.") Special investigations between 1938 and 1944 explored supposed Communist connections with the New Deal, but the impact on Franklin Roosevelt's general popularity was minimal. (Unfortunately, those accusations were to gain more credence in regard to New Deal legislators by the 1950 election, as shall be seen.) By 1946, however, as relations between the United States and its former ally the Soviet Union soured, the Committee, now under the leadership of cantankerous Representative Martin Dies (D-TX), again turned to other issues, including Communist influences in the New Deal (now considered fairer game since the war had been won and the ideological

line in the sand between democracy and "totalitarianism" had been more deeply drawn), allegations of disloyalty among government employees, and the Ku Klux Klan. KKK investigations, however, were cut short when white supremacist Representative John E. Rankin (D-MS) made the comment that "After all, the KKK is an old American institution." In another validation of American racism, all but one member of the Committee (Herman Elberhatter, D-PA) upheld the wartime internment of Japanese Americans.[420]

Humorless—and certainly constitutionally perilous—as all this appeared, there were moments of comic relief. Hallie Flanagan, former director of the Federal Theater Project, was questioned for half a day (a clerk in the same organization spent two days on the stand). Was it not true, Joe Stearns (D-AL) asked Ms. Flanagan, that Mr. Christopher Marlowe (Elizabethan playwright and poet 1564-1593) was a Communist? Additionally, Mr. Stearns pointed out, "Mr. Euripides (480-406 BCE) preached class warfare." [421]

The most highly publicized activities of the Committee, however, took place in 1947 and 1948. In 1947 the "Hollywood Ten" were blacklisted for the "pro-Communist un-American" artistic depictions. Approximately 300 producers, directors, writers, and actors were boycotted by the industry (only 10 percent were ever reinstated). Some, including Charlie Chaplin, left the country, others wrote under pseudonyms. Ironically some films sympathetic to the Russian resistance to the Nazis produced during the war had been considered beneficial to the American-Soviet alliance and the war effort in general; following the initiation of the Cold War, however, a spate of anticommunist films appeared, including *The Red Danube, The Red Menace,* and *The Red Planet Mars.* (Universal International was the only production company which refused to make any

such films.) The following year, under the relentless questioning of youthful Representative Richard Nixon (R-CA), Alger Hiss, despite his impressive record in government service, was accused of spying for the Soviet Union and ultimately convicted of perjury.[422]

In 1950 Elbert Thomas would find himself in this toxic environment, fighting for his political life. He did receive several accusatory letters. One from Mr. and Mrs. Gene Kloss of Taos, New Mexico, stated that his comparison of the American and Russian Revolutions was nothing less than disgraceful. The Russians, they wrote, were bent on world domination while Americans had been interested only in individual freedom. "For any United States Senator to be ignorant of the communist plot is tantamount to treason."[423] Many others, however, congratulated him on speaking for the First Amendment. A New Jersey woman wrote in October of 1947 that she wished to "congratulate you on your stand in defense of civil liberties. . . . In every way possible I shall spread information regarding the current threat to freedom of speech and basic democratic rights." Mr. and Mrs. William Blanchard of Salt Lake City told him, "We don't believe they [American soldiers] risked all of this just to come back and undo all that they had fought for, the Constitution of the United States. It seems as though this Committee stands for its name outright: Un-American." But 1947 was not 1950, and events during those years, as seen below, would significantly alter many American attitudes.[424]

Between 1946 and 1950, hundreds of articles and abstracts were written offering suggestions as to the control of atomic energy, and a justifiable worry it was indeed. Curiously very few put forward any substantive ideas as to how it could be used for

peaceful purposes. Some, considering the scholarly, intellectual, and scientific credentials of the academic community consulted, were strangely naïve. No less a scientific luminary than Bernard Brodie suggested the solution lay in stopping the manufacture of all such weaponry, disposing of those in existence, a sort of utopian agreement that such power should not be used for aggressive purposes and the violators should be punished. Most Americans believed the bomb should be kept an American secret, a hopeless and unrealistic solution, since the Russians had broken the scientific code by 1949. Elbert Thomas, not atypically, took a moral stance as early as September 26, 1945, advocating a "world-state approach via the federal principle." [425] Most agreed that the answer was international cooperation. Realistically, it must be noted that cooler heads have prevailed in keeping the genie in the bottle, but the potential for world destruction, it cannot be denied, is still very much alive and well, and certainly contributed to the dropping temperature in the Cold War.

Elbert Thomas was no stranger to the Korean community. Since the mid-1940s, he had been receiving their entreaties—both from native Korean expatriates and former Christian missionaries who had spent years there—for his aid in forming a provisional government and eventual independence for Korea. One telegram, dated March 2, 1943, read, "We are the first victims of the Japanese aggression. We are the only people in history who have defeated Japan in the past more than once and we are the only people that have been fighting Japan for the last 3 decades and ours is the oldest government in exile in the world. The 23 million people have offered to fight for democracy. Please recognize our provisional government and give us aid so that we can do our part in defeating Japan." The message also mentioned that "this year we the Koreans everywhere

are commemorating the twenty fourth anniversary of the declaration of independence of Korea establishment of the republic of Korea." Thomas responded with a letter to Ben Cohen of the White House staff, indicating that he had also asked the President this question. "I am wondering why advantage is not being taken of the fact that thousands of Koreans of military age look like Japanese, speak Japanese, and cannot be distinguished from Japanese by the ordinary Japanese soldier. It seems to me that permitting the Korean Nationalist Organization to cooperate with us might reduce by many months the length of the war in the Pacific and save hundreds of lives." Although he was well-intentioned, the actual implementation would have been extremely difficult. It did indicate, however, his sympathy with Korea's plight.[426]

Late June of 1950 was hot in Washington, D. C. So was the political temperature. Since McCarthy's appearance on the scene, Dean Acheson was receiving so much hate mail that he had been assigned bodyguards around the clock. President Truman was airborne on his way to Kansas City. It was 4 A. M. on the 38th parallel when North Korean artillery opened fire on the South. The President was informed at his home shortly after dinner. The Secretary General interpreted it as an attack on the United Nations. Seoul fell on Wednesday and the Republic of Korea defenders retreated to the Han River.

Three questions emerged as to how the war should be fought: the capabilities and intentions of North Korea and the degree to which the UN should shoulder responsibility for a resolution of the crisis; the potential involvement and strength of Communist China; and the relationship between the Commander in Chief, the commanding general in the field, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. With respect to the actual prosecution of the war,

concerns arose as to whether strategy and tactics should be a reflection of national policy or a reaction to unfolding day-to-day events. Is a democratic society capable of restraint, or is the concept inherently faulty? The fundamental issue in Korea was the wisdom of limited war; when war broke out in Korea it became clear that the situation was far more complicated than the victor being appropriately victorious, the vanquished justifiably humbled. 1950 was an election year, and, for the Republicans, what they viewed as the halting approach of the administration was simply additional evidence of Democratic ineptitude. It would be another ingredient to throw into what promised to be the nasty mix of the 1950 Congressional elections.[427]

Millard Tydings, Democratic Senator from Maryland, was well known for taking principled, controversial, often unusual stands on issues. He had opposed the New Deal because of his fiscal conservatism, was a critic of Prohibition up until its repeal, and, not without controversy, was responsible for a bill at the end of World War II calling for the United States to lead the world in nuclear disarmament. In March of 1950 he headed a committee to investigate Joseph McCarthy's early claims of communist infiltration into the federal government. The Tydings committee hearings lasted from March until July, but ultimately the committee was able to publish a report denouncing McCarthy and his claims as a hoax. When Tydings ran for re-election in 1950, McCarthy's staff created a composite picture of Tydings with Earl Browder, former president of the American Communist Party, whom Tydings had never met. Ultimately Tydings was defeated in the 1950 election. Regrettably it was but the shape of things to come.[428]

Elbert Thomas knew, given the political climate, that he would be facing an uphill battle in his fight for re-election, but he also believed that his record spoke for itself. In

hindsight, it is not difficult to see where some adjustments to this thinking and tactics might have produced for him a different result. As early as February 2, 1950, Wayne Morse, stopping in Salt Lake City, took the opportunity to voice his opinion of Thomas. "Senator Thomas," he remarked, "is one of the ablest and most scholarly men in the senate. Although he is a Democrat, I hope I can always be nonpartisan enough to recognize ability in the opposition party." (Attitudes such as those of Morse are truly scarce in the contemporary Congress.)[429] Shortly thereafter Thomas received a letter from the Deputy State Auditor and Democratic Chairman of Salt Lake District 34 advising Thomas that Democrats should counter the apparent plans to sell the American people on "the idea that the political philosophy of the Democratic Party is leading the United States into Socialism through the welfare state." The author, Mr. Charles Wall, suggested that "the Hamiltonian philosophy is in favor of the welfare state" and then proceeded to define it somewhat in terms of the Hamiltonian philosophy of internal improvements. Jefferson's theory is simply "an instrument by which people seek to effect [sic] their safety and happiness."[430] Thomas responded with "It would be fine for me if we can campaign on things taken from American History. I like to talk about such things and I believe that our land has a real mission in the world. And that we are actually carrying out that mission today."[431] It may have been an ideal campaign stance for Thomas, but perhaps he should have come out of the gate additionally armed with the achievements of the New Deal and the improvements that people had seen in their everyday lives. Additional issues that would be discussed and debated were national health insurance, old age pensions, the national budget and deficit spending, and, overarching all, the threat of socialism and communism.

To challenge Elbert Thomas the Republicans chose Wallace Foster Bennett, a successful local businessman and politician. Born to John Foster and Rosetta Elizabeth Wallace Bennett on November 13, 1898, his grandparents were English immigrants who had arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1868. Educated at public schools, he graduated from LDS High School in 1916, then enrolled in the University of Utah and majored in English and won a varsity letter in debating. A member of the university's Reserve Officers' Training Corps, his education was interrupted by service as a second lieutenant of the Infantry during World War I. With his commission he was assigned as an instructor at the Student Army Training Corps at Colorado College. Returning to the University of Utah, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1919 and served a year as principal of San Luis Stake Academy in Manassa, Colorado. He married Frances Marion Grant in 1922, daughter of the president of the LDS Church, and together they had three sons, Wallace, David, and Robert, and two daughters, Rosemary and Frances.

In 1920 Wallace Bennett returned to Salt Lake City where he became a clerk in his father's company, Bennett's Paint and Glass. His advancement was rapid. Moving up to production manager, secretary-treasurer, he became president and general manager on his father's death in 1938, ascending to chairman of the board in 1950. In addition to the family business he organized a Ford dealership, a jewelry company, and an investment company, and insurance company. He was elected president of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) in 1949, the first small businessman to be elected to the position, and spent a year touring and preaching "the partnership of the men who put up the money, the men who do the work, and the men who tie the whole thing together."[432]

The "men who [did] the work" were not so impressed. Since the 1930s Elbert

Thomas had been warning labor about NAM's antilabor policy. In an article in the *New York Post* in March of 1938, he had warned NAM of its impending self-destruction if it did not adjust its uncompromising resistance to America's "economic evolution." [433] The remarks came in the course of the LaFollette Civil Liberties Hearings. Thomas was particularly concerned about NAM's public information service through which it sent pamphlets and literature to schools and colleges. "Have you ever in your communications to manufacturers," he said, "told them to remember that there are two sides to a question?" Thomas said that one paragraph from a book on government sent to the schools could be read to support lynching or "Communism in its worst form."[434]

Bennett described himself as a "citizen" candidate who had never before been politically involved. Touring the country on behalf of NAM in 1950, he said in a 1976 interview, that he had come across disgruntled voters who claimed that "Thomas hated business, and the people I met around the country and the people in the central office of NAM said, 'Why don't you run against him?'" There was no television to "buck," in those days, he said, and he had two additional advantages: the name *Bennett* was plastered on paint cans throughout the West and he had, because of Thomas's Senate duties, a six month start on the Senator who could not get out of Washington until September. He had clearly decided to run in March.[435] He had also written a book in 1950, *Faith and Freedom: Pillars of American Democracy*, which was a not-so-thinly veiled attack on the progressivism of the Democrats. It was, he wrote in the Preface, unclear to him the "appeal that certain people find in the claims made in behalf of those extreme forces of reaction that are represented by Communists of today." Conceding that America had its "inequities," he implied that such injustices are facts of life, will never be

totally overcome, and that America's accomplishments far outweighed its failures. The status quo, he argued, is not so bad—so why are we tearing it down? "Faith in God," he said, "will save our God-ordained system."[436]

Bennett had brushed off the religious influence in the contest on the basis that he and the Senator both had substantial church credentials. The reality of life in the United States in 1950 and the emergence of McCarthyite super-patriotism meant that Thomas (and other New Dealers like him) found himself up against a formidable opponent. Bennett had also been named treasurer of the Latter-day Saints Sunday School General Board, directed the chorus of nurses of LDS Hospital, and wrote the words to *God of Power, God of Right*, a popular LDS hymn. In the secular realm he hosted a daily one-hour program *The Observatory Hour* on KSL and was president of the Salt Lake Civic Opera Company and the Salt Lake Community Chest.[437]

Still, Bennett was not unbeatable when one considers the stellar record that Thomas had built on his own. But 1950 was not 1932. The Depression, the War, and communist hysteria had made the world a very different place, and political civility had been one of the traditions to have been significantly weakened. There were others—albeit lacking Bennett's achievements—who wanted the chance to challenge Thomas. One Rue L. Clegg in a very brief preprimary ad asked for the support of teachers since some of them "think Republican candidates are against you." He noted his school-teaching family and his pro-education battles in the legislature, but it came too little too late. He quickly disappeared from the field.[438]

However, time seemed of the essence. Thomas began to appear in Utah more frequently. On March 22, 1950 he appeared at the Intermountain Indian School in

Brigham City, lauding Indian education as "one of the greatest social experiments now under way." (Some recent scholarship in this field differs from that opinion in very significant ways.) In the early precampaign days some interesting correspondence on a variety of subjects came into Thomas's office; clearly the major issues were still in the process of jelling. D. L. Hays, Relief Society Member of Salt Lake City, wrote in April of 1950 of her concern (her "admiration for him was waning") because she had heard in Carbon County that he had boasted that he "put it over on the law . . . in defeating Taft-Hartley," but also that you were "responsible for a number of bottles of liquor being distributed to certain campaign healers and labor union officials." Harold T. McKay warned of being smeared as a communist in April (from Honolulu), and Richard Cottom passed on that Senator Watkins was contributing to McCarthy's unfounded attacks.

At this point, Thomas seems to have been troubled by these (although somewhat absurd) rumors and issued a form letter on June 12 (the first of which this writer found in this collection) cautioning prominent government officials about the disaster that could result from a Republican victory in November. Letters went out to President Truman; Senator Ernest Maybank, Oscar Ewing of the Federal Security Agency; Dean Acheson, Secretary of State; John W. Snyder, Secretary of the Treasury; Louis Johnson, Secretary of Defense; J. Howard McGrath, Attorney General; Jesse M. Donaldson, Secretary of the Interior; Charles F. Brannon, Secretary of Agriculture; Charles Sawyer, Secretary of Commerce; and Maurice J. Tobin, Secretary of Labor.[439]

Then in June North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel. In July Thomas expressed his certainty that "American and U. N. troops in Korea would soon reach a rallying place and the trend then would be reversed. He conceded . . . that U. N. forces

would be justified legally in crossing the line at the source of the North Korean attack." He was scheduled to be renominated unopposed at the Democratic State Convention the following Saturday. His choice as keynote speaker had been prompted by the Korean War and the generally "critical situation in the Orient." In a letter dated July 14, 1950, (signature lost) he was reminded that Korea changed everything. "I do not expect that much attention will be given to the present Republican slogans of Communism, government spending, and the welfare state... "I think it would bolster morale and the Administration's program immeasurably if your sub-committee that has been investigating strengthening the United States came out with a program of action looking toward real world government and international law."[440]

At the Democratic State Convention on July 29, in his keynote speech he emphasized that "American liberty is under fire from two sources—Communists from without and opponents of true American principles from within." Democratic Representative Walter K. Granger also spoke on Korea, calling Thomas "the most qualified man in the United States Senate to understand the problems facing the nation today" and touched briefly on the Korean situation. "Korea," Thomas said, should be written in with the surrender papers of Japan . . . having been part of Japan since 1910." He believed, he said, both sides were trying for the same thing—unification of the country."[441] Forecasting that "the next few years will be a period of crisis and disintegrating name calling, distrust, and innuendo," the Senator said, "In one sense, the time has come when it would be nice to go off and read a book, but in another sense, if one is really interested in making the American government function to the advantage of the American people, it is also a fine time to stay in the turmoil of things and help lead to

an ultimate victory."[442]

The Utah Democratic Platform released that day revealed no surprises. "We affirm the principles of our Platform of 1948 because of the changing times," it began. Gratifying results, it went on to say, have been produced by eighteen years of Democratic management, and we propose to "check by constitutional means, socialistic and unconstitutional procedures, from whatever sources they may spring, by electing and supporting men and women whose primary urge is to promote the General Welfare." Toward those ends they proposed peace, assured and prosperous agricultural production, responsibility for education, the protection of fish and game resources, increased protection for labor, effective civil liberties, equitable tax laws, and broadening of Social Security. The final page of the document was devoted to the achievements, scholarship, intelligence, and moral character of Elbert Thomas. Parnell Black, Chairman of the Salt Lake County Democratic Committee wrote, "Thomas of Utah typifies the highest type of public service—free from self-interest, fearless in standing for what he holds is right—here in Washington where his value is known, the prayer is for Utah to send back to the United States Senate ELBERT D. THOMAS, American statesman."[443]

Not everyone agreed. In a letter to the editor published in the *Deseret News,* August 7, 1950, a World War II veteran Trent J. Parker wrote, ". . . our honorable Senator Thomas made the statement that 'American liberty today is under fire from two sources: Communists from without and opponents from true American principles from within.' Senator Thomas claims that the opponents of true Americanism as he calls them, are those people who want economy and honest government. He has an outline here of all the ways he is going to spend our money for us, through federal aid to education, Brannan

Farm Plan, farm price support, and a multitude of other pork barrel ideas. [Jefferson said] 'I place economy among the first and most important virtue and public debt as the greatest danger to be feared.' . . . I did not risk my life in World War II to defeat an enemy of freedom to come home and have it stolen from me by people whose greatest fear is that of fair competition. The boys are not dying in Korea to come home and find their freedom has been sold for a 'mess of pottage.'" [444]

Sometime in August (the literature is not dated) a pamphlet of three pages appeared that claimed to be the program for a symposium called "Our Relations with Russia." Thomas had been on good terms with the Russians since before the end of the war. The pamphlet condemned "liberalism" and tied the symposium to Max Eastman's left wing magazine *The Masses*, and Elbert Thomas with it. Elmer McClain had written in June of 1944 that "peace between the peoples of the United States and the Soviet Union will contribute to the peace of the world." Thomas responded by noting the heavy losses of the war and concluding that surely "no one will want to see anything but the friendliest relations between these two great peoples." He had supported emergency aid to the Soviet Union in his work with Soviet Jews, and was an honored guest at the banquet celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Red Army. He had attended mass meetings to commemorate the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union and spoke in tribute to the Russians in Newark in June of 1943. He had been the featured speaker at a rally sponsored by Russian War Relief on June 21, 1943, and had repeatedly voiced his hope for world unity after the war ended. All of this, seemingly so innocuous and patriotic at the time, would now come home to roost.[445]

An interesting offer came from the editor of a magazine called *In Fact*.

Apparently Thomas had requested some sort of information from the magazine. Editor George Seldes responded, "Although you do not name him, I suppose that the former NAM president who might run for Senate is someone named Bennett of Salt Lake City. If you will let me know if I am correct I will make a special search in my NAM file for items about him. . . . If you want to use my files of the NAM, and I believe I have one of the best there is, I will be glad to put them at your disposal . . . you might want to send a man here to spend a day going through them." In his response, Thomas thanks Seldes and indicates that perhaps he will take him up on his offer to "give us some ammunition."[446]

As summer deepened the temperature of the political rhetoric began to rise accordingly. On August 28, 1950, John O. Livsey of Ogden wrote to Thomas telling him why he had decided to vote the Democratic ticket. Briefly, he had been angered and disgusted by Joseph McCarthy's attacks on the administration and the State Department "in which he failed to prove one of his charges which brought suffering and hardships to innocent employees of the government." It had aroused in him, he said, "the deepest contempt." He also lauded Truman's "courageous stand in dealing with MacArthur" who is "too dictatorial." He signed the letter wishing Thomas "well-deserved success in your coming campaign."[447] Throughout September Democrats turned up the heat. The Salt Lake Democratic Committee called attention to the gains made during the New Deal in an advertisement in the September 8 *Salt Lake Times.* An unsigned letter on Salt Lake County letterhead cautioned Thomas about the seriousness of the situation and the need to begin the work now and continue it "until the last vote is cast."[448]

Thomas chose to take on the Republican attack on Truman's proposed national health plan, calling it "an attack of ignorance." "One ad carries the sentence that Lenin

once said: 'Socialized medicine is the keystone of Communism.'" "I am not in favor," he said, "of social medicine programs of Sweden, Denmark, England, Germany, or Russia, if Russia has one, but if our boys are in uniform I believe in socialized medicine to the extent that the private get the same medical treatment as the general."[449] On September 29 the Democratic Committee ran an additional ad comparing health insurance versus socialized medicine and condemning the "socialism smear."[450]

Still, union men were worried by the end of September. "If the trend is not stopped," they wrote, "the unions will end up with fewer supporters in Congress than they now have, and their present strength is not enough to put across their legislative program. The defeat of Senator Frank P. Graham of North Carolina had been particularly disheartening, and confirmed a fear that union politicians were turning against their liberal sons. Thomas and his key positions were also mentioned, as was Floor Leader Scott Lucas and the complications in defeating Senator Taft of Ohio.[451]

Republican campaign rhetoric tended away from practicalities and toward ideologies, playing the communist danger card with relish. "The Republican orators have shown a disposition to attack Senator Thomas from all angles—his personal competence to represent Utah, his philosophy and his associates," one *Salt Lake Tribune* article read on September 25, 1950. "The Democrats, on the other hand, have thus far taken the oblique approach to Mr. Bennett. Their shots have been aimed at the GOP candidate via the National Association of Manufacturers. Republicans are attempting to nullify this line of attack by accusing the Democrat of trying to make success by a Republican reprehensible." A classic example can be found in the *Salt Lake Tribune* of September 26, 1950.[452] In side-by-side columns each party presented its case. In Loa County

Thomas pointed to the rise in farm income since 1932. On the opposite side Bennett devoted his address to making sure his audience knew that the issues of the election were "liberty or socialism." Another frequent Republican theme was Elbert Thomas's book *The Four Fears,* which had been published in 1944.

The Four Fears was written in an attempt by Thomas to explain how the war had changed the world and what kind of peace Americans could expect to win. "The after-war world," he wrote, "will be a world with the center of interest shifting away from the Western Hemisphere to the East. Asia, like Europe, is allied with distant powers and divided within. Yet the preponderance of Asiatic populations will throw the center of gravity to the Eastern Hemisphere. Since the beginning of time Asia has been a world problem. Now it is *the* world problem. The conflicts in which the four major allies—Russia, China, the United States, and Great Britain—are fighting are Asiatic conflicts. But long after Asia will have ceased to be a theater of military operations it will be predominant; for the three greatest social, political, and economic revolutions—*the Chinese, the Indian, and the Russian*—are essentially Asiatic." (Italics mine) The four fears of America, according to Thomas, have traditionally been The Fear of Entangling Alliances, The Fear of England, The Fear of Russia, and the Fear of Revolution. Americans, he contended, have a moral responsibility to improve the human condition, and *democracy is not infallible*. (Italics mine.) The book then proceeds to examine each of these four fears to determine whether they are driven by paranoia or realistic phenomena. In the end, however, he concludes that they must be eliminated to maintain a postwar peace. Herein lay the quarrel: the book implied that an amicable relationship with the Soviet Union would be a beneficial one for both sides. In a world where Soviet

Communism was becoming increasingly demonized daily by the right, these were fighting words. They were also words with which Thomas would have to deal for weeks to come.[453]

On September 30 the *Deseret News* published an article in which the Republicans trotted out the previously used theme of the Democrats having taken the United States into three wars in a single generation. Thomas countered by calling the Republicans the party of negativity and smearing and insisted that his opponent had answered none of his early challenges. When a full page ad appeared in the *Tribune* on September 28 lauding Bennett and his business accomplishments, his exemplary personal life, and again beating the drum of insidious communism, without a mention of Thomas or the Democrats, it was clear the gloves were coming off. (Later literature was not so kind: "As a Leader and a Statesman, Senator Thomas Has Failed Us Miserably! His record speaks for itself. For sound government, for world peace VOTE REPUBLICAN.)[454]

Curiously, Thomas was repeatedly accused of indulging in "personalities and smearing," something older voters claimed he had promised never to do. His criticism of NAM made some people especially touchy, since it "belittled" "our American industrial organization. What else do we have in America which is so outstanding? Certainly not statesmanship which has sold such allies as China down the river and betrayed the American people." Memories, apparently, were short regarding "businessmen" such as John Edgworth of NAM who said he never paid men what they were owed but what they were worth or the isolationist attitudes that had allowed the American people to read of the rape of Nanking by the Japanese with dispassion. But again, 1950 was not 1932. "Read Senator Thomas's writings," Bennett urged his audiences, " to see what he really

thinks of Russia and Communism." He then added that Thomas did his best to "allay our fears of Russia and Communism" and "dispel our fear of revolution."[455]

At one point Thomas had had enough. Speaking at the Stoker school in Bountiful, he demanded a public apology from those responsible for distributing handbills accusing him of associating with persons engaged in communist activity. The charge made on the handbill, he said, "is the most false, defamatory, insidious, dishonest and hateful attack upon a man's good name and character as I have ever seen. It is such a low effort of muckraking scurrility as to be unbelievable. How low can men sink?" "I may not have to live the rest of my life as a Senator," he stated, but "I do have to live the rest of my life as Elbert Thomas. When I get through with the people responsible for this libel, politics in this state will be on a cleaner and more American level." How this episode, with all its legal ramifications, was resolved is not mentioned.[456] Little did he know, worse was to come.

The race was being watched closely in Washington. Drew Pearson noted that he had been watching from "backstage" for ten long months, hounding some members and goading others. Now, he said, he would like to pass out some tributes. "By and large this has been an efficient Congress, has developed some A-1 men and, though space doesn't permit paying tribute to all, here are some of the Senators who did outstanding jobs in turning the wheels of democracy on Capitol Hill." Heading the list was Elbert Thomas. "The scholar of the Senate," Pearson wrote. "Keeps out of the spotlight and off the soapbox. Acts more like a professor and a missionary (which he once was). The Senate Labor Committee he chaired ground out more work than any other. He also personally pioneered aid-to-education through the Senate." Others who made the list included

George Aiken of Vermont, Robert Taft of Ohio, Russell Long of Louisiana, Richard Russell of Georgia, Frank Graham of North Carolina, Lister Hill of Alabama, Wayne Morse of Oregon, Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, and others—Hubert Humphrey, Estes Kefauver, Claude Pepper, Leverett Saltonstall, McCarthy of Wisconsin "as a healthy opposition to the Democratic majority," and John Sparkman of Alabama. Secretary of Labor Maurice J. Tobin visited Salt Lake City to praise Thomas's vital role in lifting the nation out of the big depression by means of legislation which has strengthened the free enterprise system.[457]

When October began and the election drew closer, a spate of pro-Thomas handbills and advertisements began to appear. The majority centered around "Let's Look At The Record," for Thomas truly believed Utah voters were intelligent enough to see through the smoke screen of communist hysteria and recall what his work had accomplished for them. Literature listed his many authorships of legislation and his prestigious leadership positions. Under the banner "Senator Thomas Works for Utah" lists of his achievements appeared including minimum wage, the Fair Labor Standards Act, higher wages, Social Security, the Civil Liberties Committee, the G. I. Bill of Rights, industrial expansion, personal incomes, bank deposits, employment figures, and manufacturing plant growth. "Utah Will Keep His Power and Influence" the brochure read: "Continue Utah's Progress and Prosperity." There was no mention of Bennett, NAM, or Republic rhetoric. Labor was especially active and enthusiastic in the campaign. [458]

Speeches reiterated his achievements. "Business is good. Paralysis and fear are gone. Economic well-being and spiritual outlook are at an all-time high. All progress will

be meaningless without world peace, however. We have to face the world situation as it is. WE NEED THOMAS IN THE SENATE!"

Korea continued to be a topic of discussion. An Army spokesman expressed belief that a continuous landing of United Nations troops and material in Korea could be expected. He voiced his opinion at a briefing of Pentagon reports when questions about reports that major reinforcements are reaching the American forces in Korea. "I think you can expect a continuous landing of troops and material," the Army spokesman said. He had based his expectation on "what you already know" but did not specifically mention the fact that elements of the First Marine Division and the Army's Second Infantry Division have been on their way from the U. S. to the Far East for some time. When rationing was mentioned, Senator Thomas commented, "I don't think rationing is going to become necessary. Any shortage that now exists is created by buyers panicked by the threat of large scale war." He also added, when asked about taxes, that the increased expenditures confronted by the government undoubtedly would mean an increase in taxes.[459] At Ogden on October 30, Bennett stated that Korea is only the beginning of the terrible price America must pay for the "Roosevelt-Truman foreign policy ineptness, appeasement and bungling." "Yet," he said, "those who got us into this mess are trying to make the voters believe that victory in Korea is the ultimate answer to all the problems. And, because we don't let them get away with it, Elbert D. Thomas has the unmitigated gall to intimate that half the American people would rather win an election than a Korean victory when he said: 'Republicans have actually hoped that we would not be successful in Korea.'" Mr. Bennett additionally charged that the administration has dropped an "iron curtain" over its future plans, . . . but warned not to be surprised if . . . American troops

are ordered into Indo-China as the second installment."[460]

In another vein, the issue of "smear politics" returned. In a blistering attack on the Republican organization, U. S. Attorney General J. Howard McGrath said he believed that what he termed "Gerald L. K. Smith campaign stuff" could be tied "right back to the Republican national committee." Speaking before several hundred at the Newhouse Hotel in Salt Lake City he displayed a pamphlet that accused Elbert Thomas of participating in a communist meeting in New York City. The pamphlet, he declared, was a lie from "start to finish," since Thomas had done no such thing. "I understand," he continued, "that the Republican Party of Utah has disclaimed responsibility for this pamphlet. But it is part of a pattern . . . I can only warn them to keep their hands clean. We have some strong evidence now." George Guy Gabrielson, Chairman of the Republican National Committee, was in Utah but could not be reached for comment, being at a duck club somewhere near Brigham City. The Attorney General said he was well aware of what Senator Thomas was going through, with the "maligning, lying and smearing," because he too counted himself "among the liberal elements of the party." It is to be expected, he concluded.[461]

Speaking at a rally in Helper on October 24, 1950, Thomas accused his Republican opponent Bennett of "back-tracking" and "me-too-ism." "Until two weeks ago the Senator said, the NAM candidate, running on the Republican record and NAM reactionary responses, was calling everything the Democrats have done for the past 18 years socialism and paternalism. He followed the old NAM pattern that 'if you can't win on merit, call it a dirty name.'" He accused Bennett of trying to walk down both sides of the street at the same time, since he had not called for repeal of one Democratic law

"enacted in Congress over the opposition of NAM and the Republicans." The following day, speaking to the workers of the 11th legislative district, Thomas argued that the Democratic Party has been so beneficial to the United States that the Republican Party 'cannot succeed by opposing it.'" His point was that since Republicans could not attack the Democratic domestic record in any substantive way, since it had been too successful, they had to switch to a strategy of accusing the Democrats of socialism and communism.[462]

Far from being on the defensive, Bennett that same day in the *Salt Lake Tribune* claimed that his opponent is "apparently resorting to deliberate and consistent misstatement of both my words and my position in a frantic effort to stave off defeat." Addressing a group of Salt Lake county supporters at the Forest Dale club house, he said, "By trying to put words in my mouth and planks in my platform, Mr. Thomas builds himself a straw man and then proceeds to mow him down." Next to the article a photograph of Bennett appeared with the caption, "We support Wallace F. Bennett because his beliefs agree with those of Thomas Jefferson—the founder of the Democratic Party: I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences of too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it." A quarter-page ad on October 30 claimed that "in the decades of inflationary Democratic spending, 1929 (?) to 1949 we have had increases in wages by 150%, taxes by 10000 %, cost of government by 1200%, and the national debt by 1400%." The ad may have been a response to a full page ad in the *Salt Lake Tribune* the previous day prominently featuring President Truman speaking on behalf of what Democratic government had done for the country, especially in relation to "common" as opposed to "privileged" people, and a ringing endorsement of Elbert Thomas and his

contributions to their well-being.[463]

The race was now receiving national attention. Thomas received mail from outside his constituency on a regular basis. On October 30 Dudley Taylor of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, wrote an incensed letter regarding attacks by columnists Sidney Sokolsky and Westbrook Pegler and noted that he felt "innocent people ought to slap down these gossipers and smear artists." [464] Sokolsky took Thomas to task in his October 30 column regarding his book *The Four Fears* and his "falsehoods" that implied he believed Stalin is justified and the United States a war criminal. "Were you off the beam," he asked, "or have our boys died in Korea in pursuit of imperialism? It's up to you, Senator!"[465]

The following day the *Deseret News* published a quarter-page ad asking voters if they had war bonds? A savings account? A life insurance policy? Social security benefits to come? A pension? If you do, the ad continued, you are being robbed by inflation. However, most of the benefits above were New Deal innovations which no one would have in any case without Democratic activism. "Protect your future," the ad concluded. One letter asked Thomas to "explain himself" about presiding over a "Communist fund-raising banquet, which took place on January 22, 1945. "Will you answer me?" (The answer was no.)[466]

One letter of note came from Mr. Glenn Everett in Washington, D. C., concerned about the low-brow campaign being run by the Republicans. You must, he said, "administer Bennett and his crowd a good licking." He encouraged Thomas's staff to preserve Republican campaign literature since it is so "vicious and will reflect credit on you in the light of later years." In other words, off with the gloves. Thomas's response

was typical: "I am trying to maintain our own efforts on a high plane because I have found in the past that this is the best policy. It is difficult to measure the effect which the smear tactics will have, but I like to believe that most of our intelligent Utah people *will not be misled by such questionable tactics."* (Italics mine.) Again, ethics, morality, and the assumption of the basic decency and intelligence that had guided his life were the foundations of his belief system. Regrettably, this was not, again, the world of the 1930s when there had been no mushroom cloud and no rising Soviet Union.[467] His greatest supportive bloc continued to be labor, which flooded the state with ads and broadcast addresses on his behalf in the week before the election.

October was ending and the election was slated for little more than a week away. But October had been eventful. His endorsements were impressive: the National Education Association (he and Robert Taft and Lister Hill); always and enthusiastically labor, violently anti-NAM and nearly worshipful of Thomas. One letter said (and as far as this writer could discover, it was true) "No citizen of Utah has ever written a letter to Senator Thomas without getting a courteous reply and all the help the senator could give. If any action is justified and possible, Thomas can get it for his constituents. He 'knows the ropes' in Washington, as no new senator can know them, and his power and prestige as chairman and leading member of important Senate committees give him great influence with all government branches from the White House on down. But Elbert Thomas won't ask anyone in Washington or anywhere else, to do anything he considers wrong or dishonest. That simply is not in his moral 'make-up.'"[468]

However, in Doris Fleeson's column on October 12, she made a point—one that had been discreetly discussed but needed to come to light. "Senator Thomas," she wrote,

apparently made one of the oldest mistakes in politics; he forgot to cultivate the grass roots as assiduously as he did his growing importance in the Capital. He is accused of going to Europe while inquiries from the home folks went unanswered. Additionally, he was being criticized in churches at home. George Manwaring had written to him on October 10 that the communist smear was taking hold—dirty political mess though it may be, Manwaring wrote, it was harmful and needed to be dealt with face to face. Parnell Black, Chairman of the Salt Lake County Democratic Committee in a radio address charged Governor J. Bracken Lee with contributing to the smear campaign, despite disavowals from all opposition leaders. On June 30, 1950, according to Black, Jeremiah Stokes of Dearborn, Michigan, sent to Marilyn Allen a thirty-six page manuscript "in which he had set forth in vituperative language the charges now being made against Senator Thomas." Stokes wrote to Allen, "You did a good job on Thomas and I know that the material I sent you is invulnerable. I am glad the Governor is using the material we have prepared. I know he put it into the hands of the State Republican Committee."[469] (This writer, in the process of research, became increasingly convinced that although Thomas did not, nor could he, stoop to the opposition's level, he did appear too far above the fray, needed to throw a few punches of his own—there were plenty to throw—and get out and press the flesh, or as Lyndon Johnson would say, "Come out and hear the speakin." Thomas tended to come off *too* far above it all; he needed to engage more obviously in battle. Simply stated, he needed to go home and get back in touch.)

There were constituents out there unconvinced and appalled. Jonetta Birkin of Kaysville wrote of her "deep regret" of the "dastardly attacks made upon you in the present campaign and I have been thoroughly aroused by this cowardly smear." She

indicated her intention to contact her friends and spread the word. Ernest L. Dee of Salt Lake City encouraged him to "keep his feet on the ground and let Bennett sling the mud," as did a telegram from C .T. Anderson of the Railway Labors Political League, who "strongly urged" him not to go on the defensive but to conduct an affirmative campaign to neutralize the "smear" boys.[470] Drew Pearson wrote to tell him he was doing "a terrific job for your country and hope that you will have many, many more years of useful service. I know that the country is being molded for the better because of your influence."[471]

So November came, the week of the election, and the Republicans had saved the best for last. Under the masthead of *The United States Senate News*, official looking if nothing else, in reality it was a crude advertising device financed by the Republican Party. The "smear boys" pulled out all the stops. Vicious cartoons took up the majority of space. Under the headline "Thomas Philosophy Wins Red Approval; Thomas Voted Against Defense" was a coarse and tasteless cartoon of labor using a smiling Thomas as a puppet—the string pullers wore signs such as ILO, Pink Pressure Groups, Labor Czars, and Socialists. They also sported stubble, loud plaid suits, and either large cigars or cigarettes (anathema in Utah). The bottom of the page contained articles entitled "Yalta Agreement Led to Korean War," "This is Their Red Record," and their plans to socialize medicine, a frequent tune played during the campaign regarding President Truman's plan for national health insurance. A box article by J. Edgar Hoover warned against "atheistic materialism," and another article was entitled "Thomas Votes War Machine to Russians," which was tied to the Marshall Plan. The most offensive was a full half page above the fold series of cartoons (complete with stubbled cigarette-smoking enthusiastic "commie"

touting *The Four Fears* with the caption "Sure is Meat for us!") Other frames showed Thomas objecting with NO! NO! WE DON'T! When asked if we wanted strong military defense forces. Frame four shows Thomas encouraging the ubiquitous "commie" objecting to signing an "anti-communist affidavit" and Thomas agreeing "to repeal that kind of law." One particularly odd frame shows Thomas as a bird sitting in a "Well Feathered Nest" because of Congressional pay raises and pensions. A split screen shows MacArthur encouraging a strong Asia while Truman below encourages the abandonment of Korea and Formosa. Frame seven castigates national health care, but truth prevails in the end: Mr. and Mrs. Voter have made the wise choice to vote Republican. The entire publication was not only exaggerated at best and riddled with lies but poorly and coarsely drawn graphically and artistically, despite its bid for legitimacy with *United States Senate News.* As a sort of capstone it is followed by a full-page ad quoting the scripture at top: "Thou shalt not bear false witness." "Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of your own eye; and then . . ." The rest of the sheet is devoted to an indictment of the Democratic lies and smear tactics used in the campaign, talking about The Big Lie and the Big Smear.[472]

Front page on November 1 of *Engineers News* bore the headline "U. S. Probes Vicious Smear on Thomas." Subtitle reads "Plot of Eastern Hate-Mongers is Now Backfiring." Given that the *News* is a trade journal, nevertheless attention was being paid to less than civil tactics. "According to Frank Edwards, AFL radio commentator," the text reads, "the tactics are the worst he's seen anywhere in the vicious, last ditch drive by U. S. Tories to buy out control of the government." The article also indicated a "strong swing toward Thomas" and claimed that the American Medical Association had been in partnership with the opposition. However, the same day Republicans issued a half-page

ad entitled "What Makes This Man Thomas 'Sling Mud' and 'Smear'"[473] (*Salt Lake Tribune,* November 1, 1950.) "Is it the canker of guilty conscience that gnaws at Elbert D. Thomas' Heart?" The article proceeds to claim that Communists were recruited by Robert LaFollette for the committee, and that in reality neither LaFollette or Thomas ran the committee—the real powers were John Abt and Charles Kramer aka Krivitsky. The following day another half-page ad appeared claiming that "Labor Czars" had made deals with Thomas, Reva Beck Bosone (the first woman to be elected to the U. S. House of Representatives by Utah voters), and Walter Granger to overturn Taft-Hartley and turn total power over to John L. Lewis. "Nothing Else Matters" the pamphlet declared repeatedly.[474]

Support, however, was alive and well. The Nisei Committee for Thomas, Bosone, and Granger wrote to thank the Democrats for their civil rights legislation and to pledge support, as did the National Director of B'nai B'rith, Utah Veterans, the American Parents Committee, and individuals from throughout the state. The Republicans were not, however, to be outdone. One Bennett ad encouraged people to elect the younger man (Bennett was then 41 but 75 when he retired), since Thomas was in his fifties. The American Medical Association mounted a 1.1 million dollar campaign to defeat national health care.[475]

In one last-ditch attempt Bennett attempted to tar Thomas with the Communist brush in a pamphlet sponsored by the Anti-Communist League of America, which carried a photo of Thomas with left wing *Negro* (italics mine) entertainer Paul Robeson at an affair staged by the *New Masses.* One ad touted Bennett as the friend of the "Workers of Utah;" another wanted Thomas to explain why he had appointed non-Utah boys to

Annapolis, including a nephew by marriage. One of the strangest (not to mention ironic) was an artist's rendition of what buying power was in 1940 as compared to 1950. The point was to spotlight the effects of inflation, but the underlying implication seemed to have been missed: few people could have bought a car, a refrigerator, new clothing, or accumulated a savings account by 1940 had it not been for the New Deal.[476]

Election Day did mercifully arrive—and the night before both candidates were hopeful. Both thanked their supporters. Grant Macfarlane, Democratic State Chairman, marveled at the depths to which the opposition had sunk. "At no time prior to the campaign did I feel that the Democratic candidates would be subjected to cat-calls of 'communist' or 'socialism' merely because they were Democrats who had the record of upholding the dignity of mankind and were interested in peace in the world." A. Pratt Kesler, Republican State Chairman wrote, "Today is freedom day. It is the day when every citizen realizes that American government 'by, for and of the people' is a marvelous reality, not just an empty phrase."

So on Tuesday, November 7, 1950, the people of Utah went to the polls. In the end, according to the *Deseret News*, with 948 of 954 Districts reporting, Wallace F. Bennett had defeated Elbert Thomas by a vote of 142,216 to 121, 014. Senator Thomas sent the following message to Senator-elect Bennett: "Dear Wallace, May service to our government and our state bring you great satisfaction. Success to you and may our state and people prosper as you serve them. Best wishes to your family. Most sincerely yours, Elbert D. Thomas." He also thanked his friends for their "loyal service . . . I campaigned in this election as I have always campaigned—on the record and the promise of the Democratic Party. The people have made their decision. I am already reconciled to it."[477]

The obligatory post mortem was conducted. Thomas was for the most part silent and accepting of the results. But a letter to the editor of the *Salt Lake Telegram* the day following the election bears some interest. Written by reporter Cecil E. Matthews, he says he was inspired by Drew Pearson. "Long-time newspaperman that I have been, I have looked upon Utah citizens as a conscientious, discerning class ever since spending the winter of 1947 in Salt Lake City. But came the election of 1950 when Elmer [sic] Thomas went down to defeat because of the unabashed gang of political tricksters who camped on his trail, and I have had a different notion since about Utah's citizenry."[478]

"When Al Hermann, national committee executive director of the Republican Party declares that 'We all know Senator Thomas was not a Communist, but those tactics were necessary to balance the pseudo liberal newspapers which were for him,' it is time for the citizenship of Utah to adorn themselves with sackcloth and ashes." A supposed Congressional record with statements attacking Thomas as a Communist was circulated to all mailboxes in the last hours of the campaign, so late that Thomas had no opportunity to reply.

"That was the kind of 'tactics' employed to beat him," said Drew Pearson, "and that was the kind of disreputable fodder to feed my own flesh and blood in Salt Lake City and, through such deceit, drive them away from supporting Thomas. Aye, it was the same kind of 'tactics' employed against Joseph Smith and which ultimately led to his murder and forced his followers from their homes and hounded them wherever they went.

"To what depths has the Republican party of Utah fallen?"[479] (Ibid.)

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CHAPTER 10

RESTING IN THE HIGHEST GOOD

Letters of condolence came from every quarter, too many to list. Although looking at his life has allowed the reader to gauge the respect he held in Utah, in Washington, and throughout the world, the communications truly bring it home. That he would clearly and deeply be missed in the Senate was obvious. Every note was answered, stoically, sadly perhaps, but without bitterness or recrimination. Among those expressing admiration and regret were Hubert Humphrey; Walter F. George; William Benton; Frank Graham (a close friend and fellow liberal from North Carolina who had lost his own primary); Estes Kefauver; India Edwards, Vice Chairman Democratic National Committee; Gail Martin, Cooper and Crowe Advertising; Glenn D. Everett, National Press Correspondent; James Loeb, Jr., Americans for Democratic Action; Larry Tajiri, Editor of the *Pacific Citizen*; Frieda S. Miller, Director, the Women's Bureau Department of Labor. A Tribute to Elbert D. Thomas was printed, mounted, and signed by James E. Murray, Lister Hill, Herbert Lehman, Matthew M. Neely, Forrest C. Bonnell, Wayne Morse, Paul H. Douglas, Hubert Humphrey, and Claude Pepper.[480]

He made it clear as early as November 29 that he did not intend to stay idle, although he voiced his intention not to return to Utah, leading one to believe that he did indeed want other employment in the federal government. His name had been suggested as director of the recently created National Science Foundation. It was also rumored that

he would like an ambassadorship, for which he was certainly qualified. Rumors also circulated that he would be chosen by President Truman as High Commissioner of the Pacific Trusteeship Islands. He had, he said, spoken to the President but only regarding "the election results and other matters." But *The Salt Lake Tribune* on December 2, 1950, reported that he was slated for an appointment with the President for the next day to be offered a high federal post. Most money was on the Trusteeship.[481]

These islands, some 800 in number, included the Marianas, the Marshalls, and the Carolines, which were all taken from Japan after the war. Administration was at that time under the auspices of the Navy but was slated to be transferred to the Interior Department on July 1, 1951. Thomas was well regarded as a candidate because of his experience in the Far East, his knowledge of Japanese language and culture, and his membership on the Foreign Relations Committee. Headquarters for the territory at the time were in Honolulu but speculation was that the administration center would be moved father west into the Pacific. Thomas was close-mouthed and declined to discuss his future plans, although it was known that he had been offered several prestigious positions following the election.[482] In any case, by the end of the month he had received the appointment and was now High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

He anticipated a responsible and active position. In the Foreword to the *Sources of Authority of Government for the Trust Territory* he wrote about the newly adopted code and his hopes—typical—to "promote justice and bring about orderly processes within the Trust Territory." "These laws," he continued, " are written for all the people within the Territory; thus, not only will the American custom of government by law evolve, but also a degree of unity follow. This will be a major contribution in meeting the obligations of

the United States under its Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations, for in the wake of universal law and the ideal of unity, the barriers of different languages, scattered peoples, age-old caste systems, personal and hereditary rules, and local prejudices may be overcome."[483]

It was a fortuitous beginning. All his life Elbert Thomas, in terms of other religions, cultures, and belief systems, had done his best to move from simple toleration to deepened appreciation. He seemed ideally suited for the job. He and his wife quickly made themselves part of the community. He had been assigned to govern the Trust Territory on June 30, 1951. At the time the collective population of the islands was 56, 071. The Headquarters of the Deputy High Commissioner, which had previously been at Guam, had been consolidated with that of the High Commissioner at Pearl Harbor on October 7, 1949. Thomas was appointed High Commissioner on January 3, 1951. He worked with the Naval Administration at Pearl preparing for the transfer of authority to the Department of the Interior on July 1, 1951.[484]

There were six administrative headquarters. Health Advancement was devoted to improving the life conditions of the native populations. Through its health department, the Trust Territory administration aimed to promote the health of the island people, to prevent as much disease as possible, and to utilize all forms of investigation and education relating to health and disease. Education was centered around the Pacific Islands Central School (PICS) on Truk, but was slowly expanded to meet the increasing needs for secondary education in the Trust Territory. The impact of western civilization at that point had not been absorbed equally by all Micronesians. The Chamorros of the Marianas unquestionably had been affected to the greatest degree by western contacts.

For centuries they had lived successively under Spanish, German, Japanese, and American influence. Elbert Thomas, with his background, his compassion, and his sense of humanitarianism, was a gift to the territory. He and his wife enjoyed their lives there and took great pleasure in becoming part of the culture.[485]

In late winter he had been admitted to Tripler Hospital for a heart condition, but doctors considered him significantly recovered to resume his normal duties. Then early in February 10, 1953, he suddenly collapsed at home from what doctors diagnosed as a respiratory illness. He died the next day.[486]

News of his death appeared on the front page of the *Deseret News* with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who had been refused clemency by President Eisenhower. But he was lauded by friends and colleagues throughout the world. One editorial writer said "The sudden death of Dr. Thomas deprives us all of the friendship of a versatile Christian gentleman." The *Salt Lake Times* eulogized him as "a genuine world citizen, a true and effective ambassador for universal peace and understanding among all nations. Unfortunately, he was one of those spoken of by the Master who was not without honor except among his own people in his home state. After a life's work of such unselfish service to state and county to be defeated for re-election to the senate through a fostered campaign of smear and misrepresentation was an undeserved act of intolerance which he could not believe existed and gave him a shock from which he never recovered. He was truly a martyr to the cause of peace, Utah, the nation, and the world can ill afford to lose such valuable services at this time." In both private and public life he was, as one of his friends has said, "truly a practicing Christian."[487] The *Los Angeles Times* called him a "philosopher scholar," an editorial writer for the *Honolulu Advertiser* on February 13,

1953, characterized him as "a practical visionary who combined ability and acumen in the application of Christian principles. . ." He had earned a reputation as a "wise counselor and a seasoned legislator as well as a scholar and philosopher. The impress of his thinking will long be felt in our foreign relations and in the shaping of social welfare legislation. . . . he was a man of the people with a large understanding of human aspiration," the *Washington Post* said of him. The *New York Times* described him as one "of the most erudite men ever to sit in the United States Senate. One angry reader wrote to the *Tribune's "*Public Forum," noting that heroes need to be honored while they are alive. "I am amazed, 'Onlooker' wrote, after reading in the paper the brilliant things Elbert Thomas accomplished in his life time that a state would smear instead of support him when he needed it most. Seems to me we as a people are becoming very ungrateful for our great men who are honest and loyal to our country. First Roosevelt, then Forrestal, and now Thomas. Who will be next?"

In his honor the University of Utah created a book of messages of appreciation for his life's work and expressions of sympathy from those bereaved came in from around the world. There are hundreds of entries from people from all walks of life, for those are the people for whom he exhibited genuine concern. From his position in government he was in a position to demonstrate that concern by improving their lives, sometimes in small ways but often in very personal ones.

"We see America from our windows. We are cliffdwellers who know few neighbors. But we are not alone," he had written in 1950. "In our building live Catholics, Protestants, Jews, a Moslem, a Hindu and Mormons. From our window one way are the roofs of the Catholic University of American where men and women break a tradition

and attend school together. The other way is the Episcopal Cathedral, growing slowly as cathedrals did in Old Europe, and housing the remains of Dewey, who carried our flag so far, and Wilson, who made America universal, a Protestant holdover of a Catholic Europe . . . From the same window we see Cardinal Gibbons and Marconi in bronze. Science and religion – no conflict from our window, but what memories rush through my mind. I remember seeing my mother when I saw a Buddhist prayer wheel turned by a water wheel. Without moving our chairs and within a stone's throw we see five churches and the most beautiful Catholic edifice in Washington, with its sixteen-petal-chrysanthemum window . . . a Buddhist symbol and the Japanese imperial crest."[488]

After Elbert Thomas lost the 1950 election and before he left Washington, he had stayed for several months in his Washington apartment, which he describes above. But if one looks more deeply, one can see more than an overview of a cityscape—for what he was describing was a metaphor of how he saw the world, in all its beauty and diversity. He had been indeed a citizen of that world, and as this writer has mentioned before, had years before made that rare transition from the simplicity of toleration to the kaleidoscopic complexity of appreciation.

He believed that the words of Jefferson gave to man the dignity of gods: "God created the mind free, no man shall be compelled to support any religious ministry or suffer on account of his beliefs. All men have liberty of religious opinion. Their morality is part of their nature. I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively." And there is no evidence that he ever, as so many so-called "religious" people do, confused religion with ethics and morality. He freely admitted that American and Mormon influences had jointly and separately contributed to the making of Elbert

Thomas and they are related. “We cannot build world organization without morals . . . This nation which accepts a higher law than a national one also recognizes responsibilities and objectives larger than national ones.”[489]

Many of the words above were written by Elbert Thomas toward the end of his life at the behest of Rabbi Louis Finkelstein as an address and publication for the Institute of Religious and Social Studies in New York, but the opportunity gave him introspective time to examine his world view on morality, ethics, and religion. Although he knew much of his political influence was behind him, he also knew that challenges still lay ahead. “In the building of the future political world I would start with the Declaration of Independence,” he wrote. “I have written in other places that the spirit and theory of the American Revolution will yet encircle the globe. Since the invention of the American Federal system I have interpreted the suggestions for world organization and the development of democracy, with its concept of liberty and freedom as part of the great ‘latter-day’ development.”[490]

In his political career, his first concern was men, women, and children. In 1932 he did not see the implications and results of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, but rather children ill-fed, ill-clothed, bewildered and frantic parents, lost homes, lost hopes. He had lived an advantaged life; he knew it and was grateful for it, but had seen the result of the lack of opportunity all around him. His ethical-moral core compelled him to address this human suffering.

Elbert Thomas was an American politician in whom the people of Utah, and indeed the nation, should take much pride, yet in the contemporary world few recognize his name, nor do they realize how fortunate the United States in particular and the world

in general were to have had his wisdom and compassion at such a crucial time in history. "Evil," it is said, "flourishes when good men do nothing." Senator Elbert Thomas was a good man, quiet, scholarly, cerebral, and gentlemanly, who did much to contribute to the elimination of a substantial amount of injustice and brutality in the human experience. He was a man whose ethical and moral center would not permit him to pursue less than a humanitarian course in all he attempted. Frank Jonas, who knew Elbert Thomas well, believed he understood a duality in morality that was very simple: righteousness or unrighteousness. He rejected stereotyped and preconceived notions and judged each person as an individual, but always acted with humility and modesty.[491]

After services held at Nuuanu Memorial Park in Honolulu, his body was taken home to Utah to lie beside his parents and his first wife Edna. Two of his daughters and his second wife would later be placed beside him. It is a simple, serene, almost obscure resting place overlooking the Salt Lake Valley he loved and the unique city and state he helped to build.

Endnotes

[480] Thomas MSS 129, Box 239.
[481] Thomas MSS 129, Box 198.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Thomas MSS 129, Box 239.
[484] Ibid.
[485] Ibid.
[486] "Trust Territory Chief Elbert D. Thomas Dies," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, Feb. 11, 1953, Thomas MSS 129, Box 239.
[487] Thomas MSS 129, Box 225.
[488] Elbert Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," Thomas MSS 129, Box 1, 1.
[489] Ibid., 2.
[490] Thomas, "Spiritual Autobiography," 9.
[491] Jonas MSS 641, Box 86.

APPENDIX A

“THE GOLDEN SPIKE” – JOHN BEECHER

The Golden Spike

(For Senator Elbert Thomas)

By John Beecher

November 1938

That was the day of America's wedding
When the steel from the east joined the steel from the west in Utah
And as the golden marriage spike was driven between the engine from Frisco
And the engine from Omaha with the proud smoke trailing from the flared stacks
The Mormon people sang their hymn "O ye mountains high
Where the clear blue sky arches over the vales of the free." (1)

How many years then doesn't matter for nothing has changed
The Wasatch is no wall of China the Great Salt Lake and the deserts do not divide anything
The gleaming planes fly over in the sun and the huge locomotives thunder in the night
Binding together the continent making America one (2)

True son of Utah Elbert Thomas your life has been as high and clear
As the silver mountains of your homeland your work for the welfare of all our people
Has brought green growth to desert places as the cool fresh water of the Utah Lake
Makes all the valley verdant through which the River Jordan flows
By Lehi and Midvale to the Great Salt Lake
Blessed by the Zion that gave the world this man (3)

Who is he? you ask

And the young men answer the millions from Peleliu and Pistoia and Aachen
From the skies over Frankfurt and Budapest from the seas above Luzon
"We know him" they answer
"He took us off the road that led nowhere
Off the cold gray street the empty lot and the bench in the park
Off the boxcars the rods and the blinds he gave us work planting small pines
That are now fragrant forests building dams in the mountains
Staunching the raw bleeding face of the land
There we first learned that we counted
And there we put on the muscle of fighting men" (4)

Or ask any man who works with his hands
In mill mine shipyard machine shop or aircraft plant
Ask close to home at the steel mill gate near Provo
Or where the big shovels bite copper ore
From Bingham's mountainside
Ask the man trudging shaftwards with his dinner bucket
Along the black road to Carbon County
If he knows Elbert Thomas
"In the old days" he will tell you
"They killed a man here—
Unavoidable accident they called them—
And the widows and orphans got nothing
Then when we tried to organize
They fired the leaders and so we struck

They put us out of the company houses
And we lived in tents on the hillside
All through that winter without fuel
With coal piled high around the mine
Where we could see it but the guards kept us off
And kept us away from the store
And even the post office
Some of our children died but our union didn't
And now we are strong
Now we are free men again
Because Elbert Thomas in the Senate
Put a stop to those things" (5)

Ask the farm wife in Sanpete County
From near Ephraim or Manti
Where the stony mountains crowd the strip of green
If she knows Elbert Thomas
And hear her story
"Yes I know him
The year before we sent him to the Senate
Our tomato crop reddened on the vines
And we picked it hoping so
But my husband brought it back from town unsold
I still can smell the rot and see his face
And remember all the night he cursed in the dark beside me

A man like a golden spike
Wedding not just a nation and continent
With the breadth of his understanding and love
But all nations all continents
You must not take him from us now
When you build a world worthy of what we bring into it
The fresh new spirits
The innocent flesh (8)

Bless your babies people of Utah
In the tabernacle and ward
Remembering how their forefathers pushed
Across the prairies mountains and deserts
Believing in Zion every inch of the desperate way (9)

True son of these men
Elbert Thomas
You push on again
Over all the boundaries of the world
Knowing every inch of the desperate way
Is the road to Zion for all mankind (10)

People of Utah
Give us this man again
Choose him with a voice so strong

That every canyon rings with it

And the Sleeping Woman wakes

Among the Wasatch Snows.

APPENDIX B

LEGISLATIVE RECORD – SENATOR ELBERT D. THOMAS

Office Copy - mailed to Mac July 6, 1962

PARTIAL LEGISLATIVE RECORD

1. Silver Purchase Act - 48 Stat. 1178 (1933)

Declaration of policy that proportion of silver to gold in the monetary stocks of the U. S. should be increased, ultimately to be ¼ of the monetary value of such stocks in silver. Minimum pruchase price of 50¢ per ounce established and authority to sell surplus stocks to domestic and foreign markets. Authority to issue silver certificates for currency use. Authority to regulate silver market in order to effectuate policy of the act.

Senator Thomas was a strong supporter of this legislation. In relation to this Senator Thomas was the person who convinced the President and others to make a differential between newly mined and ordinary silver which is still the policy of the government.

2. Wagner Act - 1935 (N. L. R. B.)

To diminish causes of labor disputes, creation of National Labor Relations Board; definition of unfair labor practices, guarantee collective bargaining, regulation of election of bargaining agents, etc.

This bill came out of the Education and Labor Committee of which Senator Thomas was a member. He strongly supported the bill.

3. Fair Labor Standards Act - 1938 (Wage-Hour Law) (Thomas-Norton Bill)

Establishes fair labor standards in employment in and affecting interstate commerce. Provides maximum hours of labor per week, with added compensation for hours above minimum; establishes a minimum wage rate for such employment; provides procedures for enforcement of act; prohibits child labor in such employment.

Senator Thomas was not only co-author of this bill but was also chairman of the Conference Committee to amend the differences between the House and Senate bills. This year the minimum was raised to 75¢ an hour.

4. "G. I." Bill - (P. L. 346, 78th Cong.) - Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.

On June 22 the President signed the act passed by Congress providing aid for readjustment to civilian life of veterans of World War II. This was the so-called GI bill of rights. Provision was included for up to 52 weeks of unemployment compensation at the rate of $20 per week, with adjusted compensation for self-employed veterans restoring themselves to business rather than seeking employment from others; guaranty of 50 percent of loans up to $2,000 with interest of not more than 4 percent for veterans establishing homes or business; $500,000,000 was appropriated for increasing veterans' facilities, including hospitals, and to strengthen assistance for finding employment through the United States Employment Service; for education and training individual grants are provided of $500 per year plus monthly subsistence

pay of $50 for single veterans and $75 for married veterans. This act is the basic law for further appropriations designed to finance the great task of returning the members of the armed services to civilian life (Public Law 346, 78th Cong.)

On December 28 the President approved the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1945, the so-called GI Bill of rights amendment. This act extended to 4 years after discharge, or termination of the war, the period of time within which veterans might begin or resume interrupted education courses, and to 9 years after end of war the period in which such courses might be completed. It also increased the subsistence allowance for veterans, while taking courses, to $65 per month if without dependents, or $90 per month if with dependents. In addition, the act extended to 10 years after termination of the war the period within which loans might be made to veterans (Public Law 268, 79 Cong.).

Senator Thomas' Soldier Education Bill was incorporated in the G. I. bill of rights and became the educational feature.

5. Strategic and Critical Materials Act - (P. L. 664, 76 Cong.)

Direct Loans to Industry Act of 1940 (amendatory) authorized the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to make loans to develop deposits of strategic and critical minerals which would be of value to United States in time of war (Public Law 664, 76th Cong.).

This bill was wholly Senator Thomas'. He is sometimes called the father of stockpiling. He was also chairman of the conference committee.

6. Strategic and Critical Materials Act of 1946 - P. L. 520 - 79th Cong.

On July 23 the President approved the Strategic and Critical Materials Stock Piling Act of 1946. This act provided for the acquisition, retention, and servicing of strategic and critical materials within the United States. A joint board composed of the Secretaries of War, Navy, and Interior Departments were to determine what materials came within the provisions of the act, and to consult with advisory committees composed of members of industries concerned with the materials to be stocked. Reports of stock-piling activities were required to be submitted to the Congress every 6 months (Public Law 520, 79th Cong.).

Senator Thomas was author of this bill. The great mining industry of Utah has been largely benefited by this act because of the continuing market provided for the minerals required. The purchases of such materials in 1947 totaled over $66 million, in 1948 over $252 million, and in 1949 over $477 million.

On July 5, 1950 Drew Pearson reported - "U. S. War Stockpiles "Thanks to the stockpiling program, the sudden Korean invasion did not catch the U. S. A. as empty-handed as Pearl Harbor. This time the United States has enough strategic materials in its warehouses to meet an emergency - even though the stockpiling program is behind schedule. For example, we have enough manganese on hand to keep the steel mills producing

full blast for two years. This would give time to import more manganese from Africa and South America, and to explore for new manganese sources in this country. In fact, at this moment American representatives are surveying the manganese fields along the African Gold Coast."

7. Selective Service Act of 1940.

Congress passed and the President signed on September 16 the Selective Service and Training Act, providing that all citizens between 21 and 35 inclusive, and aliens of the same ages who had declared intention of becoming citizens, must register October 16 for the purpose of establishing an inventory of manpower liable for training and service in the land and naval forces of the United States; 16,400,000 men were registered. The Regular Army, then 352,158 thoroughly trained officers and men, was to become the nucleus of the great new citizen's Army (Publi Law 783, 76th Cong.).

Senator Thomas was co-author of this bill. He is responsible for these provisions in the bill which guaranteed the soldier boys their jobs upon completion of service and the government having adequate traini facilities before the men could be called to the colors. Senator Thomas also served on the conference committee.

This was a vital pre-war defense measure in which Utah was proud to do its part. Without this act, the grave situation at the time of Pea Harbor would obviously have been much graver and probably even disastrous

8. Lend-Lease Act - 1941 - P. L. 11, 77th Cong.

Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act (Public Law 11, 77th Cong.) and the President signed on March 11. He approved an initial list of weapons to be sent Great Britain and Greece. (See Appendix, Table III, for list of nations eligible for lend-lease.) The act empowered the President, in the interest of national defense, to manufacture or procure defense articles, to the extent of funds to be provided by Congress, for the government of any country whose defense he deemed vital to our defens and to sell these articles, repair equipment, communicate information to these countries, and release designated items for export. The first appropriation of $7,000,000,000 followed on April 27. By September 11, 1942, Congress had appropriated for the purpose of this act $18,410,000,0 with authorized transfer of other funds in excess of $44,000,000,000.

Senator Thomas was co-author of this bill and a member of the conference committee.

The Utah industries' market outlet was greatly stimulated by thi act. The act was one of the major factors in the success of the United Nations in overcoming their foes in the last war.

9. Army Air Base Act (P. L. 263, 74th Cong.) - 1935

Congress passed, and the President signed on August 12, legislation providing for the determination of all strategic areas of the United States, Alaska, including our overseas possessions and Territories, for the purpose of locating additional permanent Air Corps stations and depots in all such areas to the extent deemed necessary by the Secretary of War (Public Law 263, 74th Cong.).

Senator Thomas was author of this bill and it passed by unanimous consent. This was the first act to bring vitalization to the Air Force. This act provided the basic authority for the construction and maintenance of the great Hill Field base near Ogden. The stimulus given to the construction industry in Utah, not only for the base itself, but also for housing construction in nearby areas was tremendous. The annual payrolls incidental to this activity have a significant effect upon business generally in Utah.

10. Flood Control Act of 1936 - P. L. 738, 74th Cong.

The Flood Control Act of 1936 authorizing the construction of certain public works for flood control represented the first comprehensive effort definitely to establish a Feiaral flood-control policy in the United States (Public Law 738, 74th Cong.).

Senator Thomas was a strong supporter of this legislation. The construction of flood control projects in Utah under this act has been widespread and beneficial to the people of Utah, particularly in Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, Wasatch, Utah counties. The people who in the past suffered heavy losses resulting from floods know what this means today in the prevention and control of such floods.

11. Home Owners Loan Corporation Act of 1933

The Home Owners' Loan Corporation Act of 1933 provided not only emergency relief but also long range planning with respect to home-mortgage indebtedness and amended the Home Loan Bank Act (Public Law 43, 73rd Cong.).

Senator Thomas supported this legislation.

All home owners in Utah who have utilized the assistance provided under this act know how their houses were saved for them when they were in such dire straits from the effects of the Great Depression.

12. The National Housing Act of 1934.

The National Housing Act of 1934 provided for a comprehensive program of home financing and mortgage insurance and private financing for repair, alteration, and building upon real property (Public Law 479, 73rd Cong

Supplemented the HOLC act, and is today the backbone of home construction. One automatically today thinks of FHA when building or purchasing a home. This legislation had Senator Thomas' full support.

13. Social Security Act of 1935.

(Public Law 271, 74th Cong.) created the Social Security Board, providing for the general welfare by establishing a system of Federal Old-Age Benefits, enabling the States to better care for the crippled, aged, and blind, dependent and crippled children, and maternal and child welfare by granting Federal financial assistance to the States. The Social Security Act of 1939, as amended (Public Law 379, 76th Cong.), liberalized old-age insurance benefits by providing benefits for aged wives, widows, children, and dependent parents and advanced the date for commencement of monthly benefit payments to January 1, 1940. This act also increased federal grants to States for child health and maternal service, crippled children, vocational rehabilitation, and public health work. Approximately 1,100,000 additional persons were extended old-age insurance by the provisions of the act.

Senator Thomas gave active support to this legislation. This act, which has been broadened and extended by major amendments in 1939 and this year, is now universally recognized, including the Republican Party, as the logical way to care for our people who come under its definitions. It remained to the Democratic Party, however, to make public recognition of a public responsibility something which had long been recognized as such in Europe. Our people in Utah who have received benefits under this act, and their families, can attest to the meaning of the program to them. (It should be noted that the NAM opposed the original Social Security Act)

14. Labor Acts generally.

(See Wagner Act, Page 1, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.) Following is probably a better description of the Fair Labor Standards Act than that found on Page 1: The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established minimum wages and hours and alleviated working conditions detrimental to maintenance of minimum standards of living necessary for health, efficiency, and general well-being of workers (Public Law 718, 75th Cong.).

The Walsh-Healey Government Contracts Act of 1936 set forth conditions and standards for labor required of contractors and manufacturers awarded Government contracts (Public Law 846, 74th Cong.). Senator Thomas was on the sub-committee that brought this into existence.

The Wagner Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Walsh-Healey Government Contracts Act have done more to promote better relationships between labor and management than all of the legislation previously enacted during the entire history of our country. The increased industrialization of our country during the past 25 years has made this advance a prime necessity, and as the industrialization of Utah progresses correspondingly, as it is now doing its significance here can easily be recognized. The procedures encouraged under these acts have shown the way to peaceful solution of all labor disputes and a [illegible] decrease in strikes having a detrimental effect upon the public at large.

15. The Full Employment Act of 1946

The Full Employment and Production Act of 1946, passed by Congres

and signed by the President on February 20, created in the Executive Office of the President a Council of Economic Advisers, who should assist and advise the President in the preparation of his economic report and recommend policies to promote and maintain a high level of employment. The act established a Congressional Joint Committee on the Economic Report to which the report should be referred each year. The committee would make a continuing study of conditions set forth in the President's economic report and file a report with the House and Senate not later than May 1 of each year (Public Law 304, 79th Cong.).

Senator Thomas was co-author of this bill. Full employment philosophy had its origin in the International Labor Organization Conference of 1944 at which Senator Thomas was the United States Delegate, appointed by the President of the United States.

This may some day be regarded by historians as one of the most significant domestic laws ever enacted by the Congress because of the machinery it established to foresee symptoms of potential depressions and recommend measures to avoid such depressions.

16. Meat, Flour, and Sugar Subsidy Act of 1946.

The Meat, Flour, and Sugar Subsidy Act of 1946 passed by the Congress was approved by the President on March 21. Under this act, meat and flour subsidies were authorized to be increased by $125,000,000 and $25,000,000, respectively. Sugar subsidies were authorized by extending the $225,000,000 authorization for the 1945 crop program operations, to include the 1946 crop operations relating to sugar and vegetables processed prior to July 1, 1946 (Public Law 328, 79th Cong.).

The producers and processors in these commodities in Utah know full well how this fact aided them in meeting the difficult days of readjustment following the war, with the corresponding economic turbulence accompanying those days. Senator Thomas supported this legislation. (We are doing a special article on sugar and how the Government's activities in this field ~~did~~ have aided growers of sugar beets, processors and consumer.)

17. Veterans Emergency Housing Act - 1946

On May 22, the President approved the Veterans' Emergency Housing Act of 1946, creating the Office of Housing Expediter, in order to insure adequate housing facilities for veterans and to prevent speculation and excessive prices in sale of houses. The provisions of the National Housing Act authorizing mortgage insurance were amended by increasing the aggregate amount of the principal obligations on mortgages insurable to $2,800,000,000 ($3,800,000,000 upon refinancing existing mortgages, at June 30, 1947; reduced the interest rate from 5 to 4 percent, and increased from $1,350 to $1,500 the mortgage guaranty limit per room on dwelling property; and authorized the Expediter to increase this amount of $1,800 where cost levels so required. In order to speed lumber production it was provided that $15,000,000 of the funds made available under this act could be used for the construction of access roads to standing timber on Government-owned

lands. The provisions of this act would terminate December 1, 1947, or upon any date specified in a concurrent resolution of the Congress (Public Law 388, 79th Cong.).

Senator Thomas supported this legislation. The housing situation in those days was highly critical and this act enabled many Utah veterans to meet an acute problem which, without such a measure, would have been catastrophic, almost, to them.

18. National School Lunch Act - 1946

The President on June 4 approved the National School Lunch Act of 1946. The act provided that for the years 1947 - 50 the Federal Government shall apportion equitably among the States funds appropriated for this program on a dollar-for-dollar basis; for the years 1951-55, apportionment shall be on a basis of $1.50 by States to $1 by the Federal Government, and for the fiscal years thereafter on a ratio of $3 for the State to one Federal dollar (Public Law 396, 79 Cong.).

Senator Thomas strongly supported this legislation. This program meant a better diet for 46,565 Utah children in the 1949 fiscal year. A total of $625,774 was spent on the program in the state that year.

19. Veterans Homestead Entries Act - 1946

The Veterans' Homestead Entries Act of 1946 was approved by the President on June 25. It amended the Homestead Entries Act of 1944 (58 stat. 747), which limited its provisions to persons over 21 years of age, to provide that any persons who have served or may serve in the military or naval forces of the United States for a period of at least 90 days during World War II should not be disqualified from making homestead entry or from any other benefits of this act merely because they had not reached the age of 21 years (Public Law 440, 79th Cong.).

Senator Thomas supported this legislation. By broadening the scope of the original Homestead Act of 1944, many young Utah veterans have been afforded an opportunity to establish new homes for land cultivation in the historic Utah tradition.

20. Vocational Education Act of 1946.

Congress passed and on August 1 the President approved the Vocational Education Act of 1946, which appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1946, and annually thereafter, $10,000,000 for agriculture, $8,000,000 for home economics, $6,000,000 for trades and industry, $2,500,000 for distributive occupations. States were required to match, either by State or local funds, or both, 100 percent of the Federal appropriations. These appropriations were in addition to appropriations made under the Smith-Hughes Act (39 Stat. 929,) (Public Law 586, 79th Cong.).

This legislation came out of the ~~Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry~~ Education and Labor Committee of which Senator Thomas was a member. He was chairman of the Military

Affairs Committee at this time. Thousands of Utahns have been enabled under this act to prepare themselves for useful and remunerative occupations. Employment has thereby been stimulated and consumer purchasing power correspondingly increased.

21. Hospital Survey and Construction Act - 1946

The Hospital Survey and Construction Act of 1946 was approved by the President on August 13, adding to the Public Health Service Act provisions authorizing grants to the States for construction of hospitals; $3,000,000 for surveys and planning for the five fiscal years 1947-51 and $75,000,000 for the construction of public and nonprofit hospitals. Provisions of this act to be administered by the Surgeon General in consultation with a Federal Hospital Council consisting of himself as chairman ex officio and eight members appointed by the Federal Security Administrator (Public Law 725, 79th Cong.).

Many acute shortages in hospital facilities in Utah have been greatly relieved by this measure, and activities under this program are continuing to be carried on. Hospitals have been constructed or remodeled under this program in Monticello, Richfield, Vernal, Provo, American Fork and Salt Lake City, Utah. The total cost has been approximately $3,378,300 of which $1,267,570 was provided by the Federal Government. Senator Thomas introduced the bill which resulted in this law.

BILLS INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE ELBERT D. THOMAS

75th Congress - 3rd Session

S. Res. 238 - To provide for the printing of the report of the Secretary of Labor on migration of workers.
S. 3244 - To amend act to establish Civilian Conservation Corps (p.690).
S. 3245 - To pension J. H. Matthews (p.690).
S. 3750 - To amend law with respect to naturalization of Filipinos (p.5619).
S. 3767 - To amend Naturalization act (p.5871).
S. 3798 - To amend act to establish Civilian Conservation Corps (p.6195).
S. 3821 - For relief - J. H. Wootton (p.6791).
S. 3844 - To amend act authorizing construction of certain public works on rivers and harbors (p.7057).
S. 3993 - To provide additional compensation for those United States employees killed in law enforcement work (p.8830).
S. 4012 - To acquire for national defense purposes certain stocks of raw materials (p.8856).
S. 4057 - To amend act providing appropriation for Pershing Hall, Paris, France (p.9561).
S. 4116 - To require certain reports by contractors on public buildings (p.10159).
S. 4129 - For relief - William Henry Johnston, Jr. (p.10401)

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

ROBERT FECHNER, DIRECTOR

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF CERTAIN PHASES OF THE PROGRAM IN UTAH
PERIOD APRIL 1933 – JUNE 30, 1938

MEN

AGGREGATE NUMBER OF UTAH MEN GIVEN EMPLOYMENT..... 19,500

This figure includes:
- Enrollees..... 15,912 (Juniors, veterans, etc.)
- Non-enrolled personnel..... 3,588 (Reserve officers, work supervisors, etc.)

Utah enrollees in CCC on October 20, 1938..... 1,485

Number of CCC enrollees working in Utah camps on October 20, 1938..... 6,800

CAMPS

CCC CAMPS OPERATING IN UTAH AS OF OCTOBER 20, 1938..... 34

National Forest.....	9	Bur. of Reclamation.....	2
Soil Conservation.....	5	National Park.....	1
Div. Grazing.....	15	State Park.....	1
Bur. Biol. Survey.....	1		

WORK

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CCC ADVANCED PROGRAMS for rehabilitating grazing lands, checking soil erosion, protecting and improving forest resources, developing recreational facilities, improving wildlife conditions. Outstanding accomplishments of the Corps since April, 1933, were:

Truck trails, miles.....	2,544
Impounding and diversion dams.....	242
Irrigation channel clearing, sq. yds.....	1,227,061
Stream and lake bank protection, sq. yds.....	10,029,715
Camp stoves and fireplaces, number.....	1,035
Rodent control, acres.....	543,248
Fences, rods.....	344,012
Pipe or tile lines, water supply systems, lin. ft....	386,883

EDUCATION

IN THE HEALTHFUL atmosphere of outdoor CCC camps, enrollees are taught how to work and how to make a living. Millions of acres of forests and parks and farm lands furnish the laboratory in which young men and war veterans gain practical experience and training. All camp facilities are utilized to instill in each youth sound habits of work, pride in accomplishment and the importance of regular habits, orderliness, neatness and clean living. About 87% of all enrollees attend camp education and training programs.

MONEY

TOTAL OBLIGATIONS IN UTAH (ESTIMATED)..... $36,432,000

Estimated allotments to dependents by enrollees..... $ 3,302,000
(Enrollees allot $22 to $25 of their $30 monthly cash allowance to dependents)

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

The summary below represents legislation introduced, but some of which was not actually enacted, due either to lack of support or parts incorporated in other legislation subsequently passed. Some subjects were national in scope, but all affected certain vital interests to Utah and Utahns.

73rd CONGRESS

73rd Cong., 2d Sess.

P.L.450 – Transfer of certain lands of Fort Douglas to the University of Utah.

S. 3594 – To restore to the public domain portions of the Jordan Narro Military Reservation – Passed Senate but died in House.

74th CONGRESS

74th Cong., 1st Sess.

S. 1893 – To restore to the public domain portions of the Jordan Narro Military Reservation – Passed Senate but died in House.

P.L.263 – To authorize the selection, construction, installation and modification of permanent stations and depots for the Air Corps and Frontier air-defense bases generally – Died in Committee but legislation of similar nature was subsequently passed which became authority for establishment of such base as Hill Field.

S. 4429 – To create a Department of Education and Public Welfare.(A department of this type was recommended by the recent Hoover Commission and President Truman, but the House disapproved.)

S. 4607 – To clarify description of land granted to University of Utah under P.L. 450, 73rd Congress – Passed Senate but died in Ho

75th CONGRESS

75th Cong., 1st Sess.

S. 628 – To provide for the construction and equipment of a building for the experiment station of the Bureau of Mines at Salt Lake City – Passed and became P.L. 436. (The existing stati adjacent to the University of Utah was made possible by this act).

75th Cong., 1st Sess. (Cont'd.)

S. 2221 - To facilitate the control of soil erosion and flood damage originating upon lands within the exterior boundaries of the Cache National Forest. Became P.L. 509.

S. 2224 - To aid engineering and industrial research in connection with colleges and schools of engineering in the several States and Territories.

S. 2223 - To construct, extend and improve public school buildings in Uintah County - Passed Senate but died in House.

S. 2438 - To provide funds for erecting and equipping a junior college at Roosevelt, Duchesne County.

P.L.163 - To establish a Civilian Conservation Corps. (This provided statutory authority for the program previously carried on under authority of an Executive Order of the President. The act grew out of a committee bill of which Senator Thomas was a leading sponsor).

(Excerpt from Congressional Record):

"The C.C.C. has possibly received more praise and less criticism than any other experiment by the New Deal. This agency has not only provided work under healthful conditions for more than 2,500,000 young men, but has given them opportunity to obtain valuable vocational training."

"Young men trained in C.C.C. camps are specialists in a dozen or more fields. Thousands of them know the practical working of engines. Among them are expert truck and tractor drivers and expert mechanics and linemen. There are also radio operators, carpenters, cooks, and photographers, and in the far Northwest C.C.C. enrollees use airplanes in fighting forest fires. Along with the pilot go expert parachutists, who jump from planes to fight isolated fires in backwoods areas where no truck trail leads. Indeed the C.C.C. is the largest and best vocational school in the world."

76th CONGRESS

76th Cong., 1st Sess.

P.L.117 - To provide for the common defense by acquiring stocks of strategic and critical materials essential to the needs of industry for the manufacture of supplies for the armed forces and the civilian population in time of a national emergency

Pre-War

76th Cong., 1st Sess. (Cont'd.)

P.L.117 (Cont'd.)

and to encourage, as far as possible, the further development of strategic and critical materials within the United States for common defense. (This law became the basis for all the subsequent laws relating to this subject by establishing the original policy of the government. Additional reference to this program in previous summary).

S. 2007 - To provide for the establishment of a reservoir on Bear River, Utah, for the maintenance of water levels in the Bear River migratory bird refuge.

77th CONGRESS

77th Cong., 1st Sess.

S. 1406 - To contribute to the defense of the Western Hemisphere against external aggression and to promote the mutual understanding and insure the continental solidarity of the peoples of the American republics by the interchange of students and professors.

(While this particular bill did not become law, it served the purpose of initiating the thinking which eventually was expressed in the so-called Fulbright Act. This act has made possible the program under which scores of Utahns have continued their studies all over the world and brought nationals of other countries to Utah institutions for study.

P.L.723 - Increased by $800,000,000 the amount authorized to be appropriated for defense housing. (This act made possible the extension of a vital program of the war years. It enabled widespread activity in this field in Utah, the benefits of which continue today.)

78th CONGRESS

78th Cong., 1st Sess.

S. 953 - To establish an Urban Redevelopment Agency and to provide financial assistance to the municipalities and urban areas of the United States for their development in accordance with plans therefor.

(At the time this bill was introduced, a statement of its objectives accompanied it. A brief excerpt from this statement reads as follows:

78th Cong., 1st Sess. (Cont'd.)

S. 353 (Cont'd.)

". . .The movement of both population and industry from the older parts of the cities has left these parts in a condition which constitutes a serious social and financial liability; and for the cure of this condition and the reinvigoration of these obsolescent and declining areas, public action, both federal and local, is a necessity. This is the objective of the bill which I have introduced."

". . .Moreover, urban redevelopment will increase employment, raise the national income, and thereby increase national prosperity and well being. Finally, urban redevelopment will reinvigorate the building construction industry."

S. 1670 - To promote the welfare of the people by establishing a publicly supported adult education program stemming from the State universities and land-grant colleges, by setting up a college and university adult education extension program separate from but supplemental to the cooperative agricultural extension service authorized by previous acts, thus making broadly available to community groups and individuals the full educational resources and research findings of these public institutions of higher learning.

79th CONGRESS

79th Cong., 1st Sess.

S. 894 - To authorize the construction of certain reclamation works in the upper basin of the Colorado River. (This bill, while not enacted, as such, expressed the interest of many Western Senators and Representatives in having a reservoir and reclamation project system established in this area which would assure compliance with the Colorado River compact. The basic idea of the bill, however, will serve as a point of departure at the time the Central Utah Water Project evolves, following complete congressional study and action which is now underway.

P.L. 88 - To permit the continuation of certain subsidy payments, purchase and sale operations by corporations, under the R.F.C., relative to strategic and critical war materials. (This is another aspect of the strategic and critical materials program which is of great importance to the mining industry of Utah and the security of the United States.

79th Cong., 2d Sess.

P.L. 324 - To authorize conveyance of certain lands situated within the Fort Douglas Military Reservation to the Shriners' Hospital for Crippled Children.

80th CONGRESS

80th Cong., 1st & 2d Sess.

S. 2610 - To provide for the establishment and operation of an experiment station in Utah for research on the production, refining, transportation and use of petroleum and natural gas from coal.

S. 2756 - To stimulate the production and conservation of strategic and critical ores, metals and minerals in the interests of national defense and for the establishment within the Department of the Interior of a Mine Incentive Payments Division.

81st Congress

P. L. 273 -- To authorize the construction, operation and maintenance of the Weber Basin reclamation project.

The annual value of benefits from this project have been figured by the Bureau of Reclamation to be $6,995,000. The economic return has been estimated to be $3.35 for each dollar of costs in completing the project. These benefits can be measured in increased irrigation facilities, municipal water resources, flood control, recreation, and additional power facilities.

Under the authority of this law, the project is now under way.

P. L. 393 -- To amend the Fair Labor Standards Act.

This law increased the minimum wages of covered workers to not less than 75 cents per hour, from the previous 40 cents per hour, in recognition of the increased cost of living subsequent to the recent war. The oppressive practices affecting child labor were further restricted by direct prohibitions of such practices, as against the former indirect restraints in the original act. The enforcement provisions of the law have been strengthened so that non-compliance is steadily decreasing and the many benefits and gains to the workers greatly increased and enhanced.

It is interesting and significant to note that the 1949 amendments were unanimously supported by the full Senate committee. This demonstrates the universal acceptance of the ideas behind this legislation which, when it was originally proposed in 1937, was bitterly opposed by powerful elements. This is attributable to the fact that the many gains and benefits, both to individuals and employers are now widely recognized as broad gains for society as a whole. The act has resulted in increased wages and income for thousands of Utahns which could not have been otherwise possible.

S. 1411 -- To encourage the development of increased health services for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of physical and mental defects and conditions, for children in the public schools.

S. 1724 -- To provide for the education of children

residing on certain non-supportable federally-owned property; and children residing in localities overburdened with increased school enrollments resulting from federal activities in the area.

S. 2273 -- To assure the provision of all necessary services to prepare disabled persons for and establish them in remunerative employment, to provide grants-in-aid to the States for adjustment training services for the blind, and for establishing employment opportunities for the severely disabled.

S. 2320 -- To assist in maintaining sound domestic mining industries for the production of certain strategic metals.

S. 2415 -- To authorize federal assistance to States and local governments in major disasters. (Jointly sponsored with several Senators)

S. 3775 -- To establish a standard procedure for the creation of congressional investigating commissions. (Jointly sponsored with Sen. Ives, N. Y., as a bipartisan move)

This bill, while not of direct and immediate local interest in Utah, would, upon enactment, affect the general interests of Utahns and all citizens of the nation. It is a proposal for complete bipartisan examination of matters of grave national concern requiring congressional investigation. It would insure completely fair and unprejudicial treatment of such matters so that any reports could be accepted as such by the public.

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